6.6
2 1p

PRO
VERITATE
ET
REGNO
DEI
CHARLES HOLBROOK LIBRARY
Pacific School of Religion

A present from

[illegible] C. Savage

to James G. Briggs

Dec 29th 187[illegible]

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/positivetheology0000unse

POSITIVE THEOLOGY;

OR,

MY REASONS FOR BEING A MEMBER

OF

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Drake University Library.

BY

A. L. McKINNEY.

TROY, OHIO.

SECOND EDTION.

CINCINNATI, O.:
APPLEGATE & CO., PUBLISHERS,
No. 43 MAIN STREET.
1861.

DK
7321
M3
1861

~~289.2~~
5864

93404

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1861,

By W. T. HAWTHORN,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of Ohio.

INTRODUCTION.

Somewhat more than a year since, a very simple circumstance awakened the thought in my mind, that a work similar to the one I now send forth, might aid in diffusing the enlarged and liberal sentiments and feelings on religion now obtaining strong footing in the Christian world; and also that it might help in showing to the public the true position of the Christian Church. I immediately sketched the plan of the work, and commenced its preparation for the press. My first intention was to compass the whole in a pamphlet of about one hundred pages, that it might have the greater number of buyers and readers. But experience soon taught me the impracticability of doing even ordinary justice to the questions I proposed discussing in so narrow limits. I was, therefore, compelled either to abandon the undertaking or give up my first intention respecting its size. I chose the latter; hence the book that now commences its voyage, long or short, prosperous or disastrous.

It will not, I trust, be regarded in me as asking extenuation for any faults this volume may contain, if I should say, that it has been written amid the wearying labors and exhausting cares and anxieties of ministerial duties;

Disciples Collection
Divinity School
Library

and those in the same profession will know, "by happy experience," how to estimate them. And I may add, that during the same period, I have been holding, with a clergyman of this State, a written discussion, which has already reached over three hundred pages, and which will, if Providence permits, run through two hundred more. But enough of this. I have voluntarily written the book, and must, therefore, assume the responsibility, whatever may have been the circumstances surrounding me.

The questions developed in its pages are of great interest, entering largely into the true basis of Christian brotherhood; and likewise form the distinctive features of the Christian Church. I have also aimed to discuss them in the form of familiar letters, with this principle distinctly before me: *that I would not advocate any sentiment, nor submit any argument, which I should desire in the future to recall.* How far I have been controlled by this, time and more mature reflection may determine. As it is, I commit this volume to the brotherhood as the conscientious and cherished sentiments of a brother.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

PAGE

THE Bible is the only Rule of Religious Faith and Practice..... 7

LETTER II.

"Christian" is the only divinely authorized Name by which the Followers of Christ should be called..... 38

LETTER III.

Christian Character is the only true Test of Christian Fellowship..... 74

LETTER IV.

The Question, What is Christian Character? answered. 141

LETTER V.

The Sentiments of the Christian Church respecting God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, compared with those enunciated by various Creeds..... 195

POSITIVE THEOLOGY.

Letter I.

My Dear Sir and Brother:

You have kindly asked me for my reasons for being a member of the Christian Church, and it becomes my duty as a candid man to give them; as far, at least, as is, at present, practicable. That you have a right to make this request, I most cheerfully grant, and with equal cheerfulness set about the work of answering. I do this: first, because you confess your want of information touching my religious sentiments, held in common with the Church of which I am a member; and, second, because I regard them, my sentiments, as founded in truth. This, however, remains to be demonstrated to you.

Before I state my first reason, permit me to guard you in two directions: 1st. I do not claim to be the exponent of the sentiments which form the characteristics of the Christian Church, distinguishing it from other religious denominations; yet, I may say, without being chargeable with egotism, that I am familiar with, and cordially accept them as the platform of my faith and practice. 2d. I wish to be clearly understood, when referring to the sentiments of other religious denominations, that I do so only that you may judge whether they or I are the more nearly "*evangelical*," and with no unkind or uncourteous feelings, for many among them I hold as pious, devout Christians, numbering them with my cherished friends.

Having guarded you in these two directions, I shall proceed to submit my *first* reason for being a member of the Christian Church, viz.: *This Church accepts the Bible—the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments—as its* ONLY RULE *of religious faith and practice.* This it does without

the addition of creed or confession of faith, asking its members to study earnestly this inspired law of the kingdom, and to obey its commandments to the best of their ability; at the same time, it concedes to all the right of conscience in their search after and perception of truth. It desires no mind to be trammeled by the decrees of either popes, or cardinals, or bishops, or Councils, or Synods, or Conferences; but to be left free with the Bible as its only infallible light, its unerring guide.

Now all this suits me well. Not only does it meet the warmest feelings of my heart, but it commands the deliberate approval of my judgment. A higher and broader plain of religious association can not, in this life, be secured. It is the highest stand-point of Christian liberty, overlooking God's kingdom of truth, where no creed or confession of faith lifts up its walls of brass, circumscribing the vision to its own stereotyped limits. There are no dogmas here, backed up by ecclesiastical authority, projecting their shadows between

the soul and its search after more light. If new and more consistent ideas of Christianity are developed to the mind, it does not tremble to accept them, lest they should prove too large for the graduated scale of orthodoxy; lest it—the soul—should be declared walking upon territory outside of the limits meted out by self-named "evangelical" D. D.'s.

Permit me, now, to proceed with a demonstration of the soundness of the *first reason* for my religious association. By referring to it, you will see there are two points included. 1st. The Bible is a sufficient rule for religious *faith*. 2d. The Bible is a sufficient rule for religious *practice*. These two questions, though closely allied, admit distinct statements and arguments; and I avail myself of this that you may the more easily follow the demonstration. But, before proceeding further, it may be well to define in what sense I use the word *rule*. I mean by this term a *principle*, *standard*, or *directory;* that which *adjusts* or *regulates*. We are

now pretty well prepared to go forward; I with the demonstration, and you with the investigation of its correctness.

My *first* argument, that the "*Bible is a sufficient rule for religious faith*," rests upon the language of the Spirit. There is no question more clearly taught in the Scriptures than that they contain a full and complete development of the truths and facts essential to a sound religious faith. The very admission that they were given by "inspiration of God," and that salvation depends upon their being accepted as such by us, is sufficient of itself to place the point under argument beyond the reach of cavil. To acknowledge that God has prepared means for the return of this degenerate world—this outlying but rebellious colony of his—to himself; and that faith in certain fundamental truths and facts is indispensable to this return; and then to affirm, either directly or indirectly, that he has not in these means given a basis sufficiently broad, incorporating specific statements of the truths and facts to be

believed, is at variance with every correct idea of an all-wise and loving Father. Therefore, upon the admission that God has prepared a remedial system for the world's redemption, the conclusion is irresistible, that in this he has furnished ample means for the faith of both head and heart, and needs not the aid of Councils, Conferences, Assemblies, creeds, or confessions of faith to do this work.

But let me refer you to the direct testimony of the Spirit: "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.*"—John xx: 30, 31. It is evident that the record of Christ's life, including many of his miracles, given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, was designed to be a plain source of evidence, to produce and control our faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Indeed, this is substantially affirmed in these words:

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;" that our faith might rest in the word of inspiration, and not in the wisdom of men. Not only the purpose of these records is given, viz.: that the world might believe in Christ, but their sufficiency as a rule of faith is affirmed.

The testimony of the apostle Paul, given in his letter to the Christian Church at Rome, is no less direct in proof of the point before us. He says: "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"—Rom. x: 17. From this quotation the following conclusions may be drawn: 1st. The Bible, or word of God, furnishes the evidence upon all religious questions essential to be believed as conditions of salvation. 2d. The senses—as hearing—are the mediums through which this evidence is presented to the mind, or through which the mind is to become acquainted with the questions to be believed and the evidence sustaining them. 3d. Faith is the result of the mind's apprehending these

questions and their evidence, and its cordially accepting them. If these conclusions are correct, (and I see not, in view of the text quoted, how they can be otherwise,) it follows that the Christian's faith is predicated upon the evidence God has given in his word. And as that faith, accompanied by corresponding works, is sufficient to save him, so must the testimony upon which it rests be equally ample. But this testimony is to be found in the Bible; therefore, the word of God is a sufficient rule for religious faith.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke you will find an interesting account of an interview between Christ and two of his disciples, in which they, supposing him to be a stranger, gave a brief narrative of Jesus of Nazareth, his mighty works, his death, his burial, and also of the rumor that his sepulcher was found empty that morning; and that certain women had seen a vision of angels, "who said that he was alive." The latter facts they were strongly inclined to doubt. To them the Lord re-

plies, "*O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*" Here Christ charges them, and justly, too, with stupidity of heart in not believing the things of which they were in doubt. This want of faith in them was the result of their negligence in closely studying the writings of the prophets concerning the Messiah, and, also, their failure in accepting his teachings concerning the work of his mission. Now the force of this allegation lies in this, that the testimony of the prophets, corroborated by Christ's own teaching, was all-sufficient upon which to rest their faith in all the facts connected with the birth, teaching, works, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus; for if this testimony was not ample, then were they not justly chargeable with carelessness and stupidity.

By referring to the fourth chapter of John's narrative of Christ, you will find a record of a conversation between Jesus and a woman of Samaria, in which he speaks many precious truths. The woman, being

convinced, from what he told her, that he was the Christ, went into the city and reported all that he said; hence it is written, "*And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman.*" But after listening two days to the words of holy truth uttered by the Messiah himself, they turned to the woman and said, "*Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.*" It is evident, 1st. That the faith of the Samaritans in Christ as the Messiah rested upon the testimony he gave; 2d. Since this faith was sufficient, so must the evidence producing it have been.

Let me conclude this argument by referring to a very striking passage in the prayer of Jesus, recorded by John. The Master says: "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*"—John xvii: 20. You will observe that Christ prays most fervently for his apostles, whom he was shortly to commission to go into all the world and preach

the word; then for all those who, in after ages, should entertain living faith in him, through the word preached. It will be remarked that this living faith, which brings its possessors within the purview of Christ's prayer, is based upon the word or testimony of the apostles; and as this faith is all-embracing, uniting the soul to the Redeemer, so must, I conclude, the foundation —the Scriptures—upon which it rests be altogether adequate.

The *second* argument in maintenance of the question—the Bible is a sufficient rule for religious faith—is that the final appeal in all matters of Christian faith among Protestant denominations, is made to it. This is evident from the standard writings of the various sects, in which the testimony of the Bible is given in proof of the doctrine affirmed, and which testimony is regarded as final. It matters not how ingeniously a treatise on what may be called fundamental Christian truth is written, it will not be accepted as sound if it is not sustained by the teachings of the Scrip-

tures; or, to say the very least, it must have the apparent support of them. It is furthermore evident that an appeal to the Bible on all points of Christian doctrine is regarded as final, by the different religious organizations, from their usual method of pulpit-teaching. It is expected, nay, more, it is held imperative, that he who comes before the public as a teacher of Divine things, shall sustain the sentiments he affirms, either by the direct language of the Scriptures, or else by their clearly implied evidence. Now all this is a tacit admission that the Bible is the only and complete rule for religious faith.

The *third* argument in support of the point under examination rests upon the express declaration of this sentiment by nine-tenths, if not nineteen-twentieths of all the creeds and confessions of faith in the Protestant world. For any one of them to deny the proposition I am affirming, and then give the Bible, without note or comment, into the hands of the masses, would be as inconsistent as to acknowledge all

that I claim, and then take it from their possession.

But I will let some of these creeds speak for themselves on this point. The "Confession of Faith" received by both wings—the New and Old School—of the Presbyterian Church, says: "Under the name of holy Scripture, or the word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these:"—then follows a catalogue of the books of the Bible; after which, it adds—"All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life."—Chap. i: sec. 2d. Again, in sec. 6th, it says: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." Now all this is from high authority—from two large and influential religious denominations, embodying much learning—and should have great weight with those who compose their membership.

Permit me to introduce the testimony of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It says: "The holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."—Sec. 2d, art. 5th. Again, in its "General Rules," sec. 1st, item 7th, it says: "These are the general rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule both of our faith and practice."

I may add here that the fifth article of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church—as indeed many of their articles of faith are—is nearly a verbatim copy of the sixth article of religion of the Protestant Episcopal Church; hence, I have the direct testimony of two more large and influential religious bodies in proof of my position. I am surely in a large as well

as good company; especially so when it is remembered that all Protestant denominations give substantially the same testimony.

For the sake of variety and for the information of those who may not know the fact, there is one Church — the Roman Catholic—that takes ground directly opposed to that for which I am now pleading. The *Bible* is not the *throne* of authority to each member; but the *Church* settles all questions of faith. And it will be remembered that when this Church is said to determine articles of faith, the whole membership is not included. None but the pope, bishops, priests, and dignitaries are admitted to this "conclave." The laity have nothing to do but to hear and accept, without question, under the pains and penalties of the most terrible anathemas. To show that this Church—the ecclesiastics—deny an appeal to the Bible in matters of faith, I need only give the language of Archbishop Purcell, of Cincinnati, used in an address at the laying of the corner-stone

of the Church of St. Francis de Sales, on Bunker Hill, Sept. 11th, 1859. He says: "And God never allowed any man to appeal from the Church to the Bible." This is conclusive, as Mr. Purcell stands at the head of authority among Roman Catholics in the United States. It is due that Church that we acknowledge its consistency; for it denies the right of appeal from its decisions on questions of faith, and acts accordingly. It is encouraging, however, that we have the Protestant world fully committed in favor of the proposition, That the Bible is a sufficient rule for faith.

You may ask, "How can the various religious denominations reconcile their declaration, 'that the Bible is a sufficient rule for Christian faith,' with their making and defending creeds and confessions of faith, distinct from the Scriptures?" Well, sir, such a question is more easily asked than answered; and since I acknowledge no creed but the Bible, I shall not even attempt its solution, but leave it for those who grant all that I claim for the

one, yet tenaciously cling to the other, however inconsistent it renders their *practice* with their *theory*.

I shall now proceed to sustain the second point contained in the first reason for my being a member of the Christian Church, viz.: *That the Bible is a sufficient rule for religious practice.* And it may be well to define what I mean by the word *practice*. I use it to signify Christian life or conduct. Of course, the term *rule* is to be understood in the same sense as in the argument of the former point.

To proceed. My *first* argument in proof of the question now before us, is drawn from the positive claims of the Scriptures. It is written: "*All Scripture (is) given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"—2 Tim. iii: 16, 17. In this quotation, there are four specialties, all entering into a Christian life, for the attainment of which the Scriptures are

given. 1st. Doctrine, rendered from the word διδασκαλιαν, and means, in this connection, teaching first principles or truths. 2d. Reproof, from the word ελεγχον, and it from ελεγχω, and means to convince of error, to refute, to show to be erroneous. 3d. Correction, from the word επανορθωσιν, and means to strengthen, to restore to a pristine state. 4th. Instruction, from παιδειαν, and it from παιδευω, and the latter from παις, (a child,) and means to lead forward, to train up, as one would a child. In these four particulars—teaching, convincing of error, straightening, and training—to secure which the Scriptures are eminently serviceable—the following conclusions are clearly deducible: 1st. That they, the holy writings, are sufficiently plain in setting forth all fundamental religious truth or doctrine essential to a sound, vigorous faith. 2d. That they are entirely competent to correct or reprove the mind of any erroneous idea or sentiment it may entertain. 3d. That they furnish all the instruction necessary to en-

able the mind to straighten or correct any erroneous impressions or sentiments it may have, and to conduct it into the way of truth. 4th. That they are fully ample to train the soul that has received their teachings, marked the errors it may have imbibed and straightened or corrected them, up to a higher plain of Christian experience—to bring it nearer the bosom of God. The ultimatum of all these priceless treasures of the Bible, is "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Again: there are many passages in the Bible that clearly maintain its entire sufficiency as a rule of religious practice. My limits, however, will allow me to give but a few of them. In the nineteenth Psalm we read: "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting* (or restoring) *the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*" The terms *law*, *statutes*, *testimonies*, and *com-*

mandment doubtless refer to the revealed will of God contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, but may now, without any infraction of truth, include the writings of the New Testament. I may, therefore, claim from this testimony, 1st. The competency of the Bible to restore the soul by the perfection and plainness of its truth; 2d. To impart wisdom to the understanding by its clear testimony; 3d. To fill the soul with joyful hope by its righteous statutes; 4th. To impart light to the intellect by the adaptation of its commandments to the various relations and duties of life.

Paul, in writing his second letter to Timothy, says: "*And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" This sustains with much force the preceding quotations, and affirms the sufficiency of the Scriptures to impart the wisdom necessary to salvation.

My *second* argument in proof of the position under investigation is, *That the Bible*

Library

teaches certain leading principles which are entirely competent to govern men in all honorable and useful relations and pursuits in life. They are called *Truth*, *Justice*, *Righteousness*, *Integrity*, *Candor*, *Compassion*, *Philanthropy*, etc. That these principles are clearly inculcated in the Scriptures, will not be denied; and that they are practical in all righteous employments, is indisputably evident. Truth is designed to hold control over both head and heart in all occupations which contribute to the well-being of the human family, from the lowest up, through all grades, to the very highest plain of action. So of the other leading principles; all are to be interwoven with the very elements of the soul; and when their firm, clear, Divine counsel prevails, man will be true to his God, to himself, and to the world. It matters not whether he is in the President's chair, in the halls of Congress, on the judge's bench, in the counting-room, in the mechanic's shop, on the farm, or in the busy marts of trade, these principles, clothed as they are

with God's authority, are broad enough to cover the entire area of any or all these callings, and strong enough to sustain any one who may fill them.

My *third* argument, in further maintaining the position assumed, rests upon the *special direction of the Scriptures in sundry religious duties growing out of various relations.*

1st. Our duty arising from the relation we sustain to the entire brotherhood of man is set forth, with great clearness, in the words of Christ, and is called by common consent "The Golden Rule:" "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."—Matt. vii: 12. How plain and comprehensive this law! and were it obeyed, how grand would be the harmony among men!

2d. In the social relation the teachings of the Scriptures are not less explicit in furnishing rules of action. I will refer to one: "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" The practical result of this law is thus given by an apostle: "*Love worketh no ill*

to its neighbor." Surely no one can ask for a better precept, nor can a better be given.

3d. Over the home circle the law of the kingdom projects its authority, its Divine direction. It addresses the husband, saying: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it.*" To the wife, it says: "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*" It then turns to the children, and, in beautiful simplicity, gives them a rule of action under which they should live while around the home hearthstone, and the impress of which they should bear in their hearts through life. It is this: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise.*" It then turns to the head of the family, and, still pointing to the children, says: "*And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" How surely have the holy Scriptures hedged about the home sanctuary with rules of

life; and safely will dwell that household, the members of which commit their keeping to these Divine regulations. There is no need of the wisdom or authority of creeds or confessions of faith, than the Bible, to place the family under the wings of the Father of love.

4th. On the duties consequent upon the relation of membership in the Church of Christ, the Bible is so full that it would seem like a work of supererogation for me to attempt the proof. Yet it may be necessary that I refer to the fact and its demonstration. (1.) "*Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*"—Heb. x: 25. This is a plain rule admonishing Christians to meet for public worship, and to exhort each other to steadfastness in their profession. (2.) The entire consecration of one's self to God is enforced in these words: "*I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,*

acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. xii: 1. (3.) There are plain rules given for private and public prayer, "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret,*" etc.—Matt. vi: 6. "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.*"—James v: 16. But it is needless that I should extend this reference further, since rules for religious obedience are found on every page, especially of the New Testament; and no sincere inquirer need remain long in doubt respecting his duty.

5th. It is claimed by some that the Bible gives no special rule by which a trespassing member of Church can be properly and effectually dealt with. Such as raise this question certainly must have forgotten the instruction of Christ, which meets the case in hand. He says: "*Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*"

—Matt. xviii: 15. On the efficacy of this rule in reconciling difficulties that may arise between brethren, I risk nothing in making this statement, that ninety-nine-hundredths of the troubles arising from personal trespass, disturbing the peace of the Church, might be effectually and harmoniously adjusted if this section of the law were, in its letter and spirit, strictly followed. In it there is profound philosophy, according with human experience. This must appear evident, if you will but examine the *first* of the three steps in the process: "*Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.*" This interview is to be strictly private; free from all excitement arising from the presence of others, which is often a barrier to the spirit of conciliation. If this step to effect a reconciliation is successful, the matter is to rest here; but if it should fail, then the next step is provided for—verse 16th; and if this should not succeed, the further process is prescribed: "*Tell it to the Church,*"—verse 17th; and if he should still persist

in the wrong, then his place is with the heathen man and publican. The rule is complete; and no man professing Christianity, will presume to raise a question against its perfection. I will give another rule adapted to the restoration of an erring brother: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"—Gal. vi: 1. This breathes the spirit of the Master, who went about doing good. It makes it the duty of the truly Christian man to go meekly, gently, and kindly to the erring one, and earnestly labor for his restoration. I may claim for this what I did for the law respecting a trespassing brother: that it will seldom fail in bringing the wanderer back to the narrow way.

I have now given my *first reason*, with brief arguments and proofs, for being a member of the Christian Church, and I trust it will be satisfactory; at least, I have aimed to speak plainly and candidly, and am willing to abide the verdict of an impar-

tial juror, who decides according to reason and the law of the kingdom.

You may, however, ask, "Do not all Protestant denominations claim to take the Bible as their rule of faith and practice?" To this I answer, Yes; and lest I should be regarded as not treating them with Christian courtesy and fairness, let me refer to the facts upon which this claim is set up, and also the evidence of its truthfulness.

The facts are these: 1st. They confess the inspiration of the Bible; that it is not of man, but of God. This is going far toward acknowledging the Scriptures as a sufficient law for faith and life. Indeed, it is virtually accepting them as such. But, 2d. There is an explicit avowal, that the Bible is entirely competent to guide the earnest inquirer into all truth, which forms the basis of Christian faith and practice, and that they receive it as the law of the Church. This is evident from the quotations I have already given from some of their creeds and confessions of faith; and

knowing which, should I fail to acknowledge it, I certainly would be justly chargeable with a want of fair dealing; and this I am desirous to avoid in these letters.

Here, however, a stern query presses itself forward, demanding to be heard, and will not be set aside, namely: The truthfulness of this claim. How far is it well established? Candor compels me to answer that, although made with sincerity, its veracity is seriously questionable, for the following reasons: 1st. Each of the denominations to which I have referred, and others not mentioned, have what they call a "Creed," or "Confession of Faith," more or less formidable in size, in which are special propositions, styled, "Articles of Faith," setting forth points of doctrine which form the basis of Church organization and fellowship; and to which all are expected to subscribe who become members. To the candidate for membership, a sufficient number of leading questions are propounded to call out his sentiments respecting these "Articles of Faith;" and

if he is found deficient, that is, if he should seriously doubt the Scriptural soundness of these "*dogmas*," he is either rejected or else held to further examination.

A second reason why this claim is seriously questionable is, if a member of one of these denominations should deny the authority of its "creed," how much soever he might affirm his faith in the Scriptures, he would be tried by it, and expelled from the Church for heresy, if he persisted. This must be true, else it, the creed, is inoperative. Their members are tried by the Confession of Faith, and not by the Bible. This, I am very sure, is a fair statement of the facts as they are. I am fully aware that these respective "articles" of belief are affirmed to be fully sustained by the Scriptures. But this is a question giving strong grounds of debate, and one which I do not now propose taking up.

You have before you now two of my reasons for seriously doubting the truthfulness of the claim set up by the different Protestant denominations, that they accept

the Bible as the *only rule* of *faith* and *practice*, while *each has a creed separate from it.* I leave you as a candid man, in the light of all the facts with which you must be familiar, to decide how far my reasons are conclusive, and how far their claim is well founded.

Fraternally yours.

Letter II.

My Dear Sir and Brother:

In my former letter I gave you one reason why I am a member of the Christian Church, and I now, in further complying with your earnest request, avail myself of the blessings of Divine Providence to give a *second*, which I do with entire confidence, feeling assured of your sincerity in making the inquiry, and of the Scriptural truth of my position. An impartial hearing is all that is asked.

My *second* reason why I am a member of the Christian Church is, this brotherhood receives the name *Christian* as the *only divinely authorized appellation by which the followers of Christ should be designated or called.* This they do meekly, reverently, and not arrogantly, as is charged by some. And certainly the name is beautiful and expressive, associating with itself the most

deeply interesting events and relations connected with the world's history, namely: the birth, life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ, our redemption from the bondage of sin through him, and our relation to him as "Head over all things to the Church." But as beautiful and expressive as the term Christian is, and as strongly as we may be inclined to give it the unmistakable preference, it will not do to claim it to be the only divinely authorized name by which the disciples of Christ should be called without the clearest proof. To demand this is just and right, and to give it is the imperative duty of him who may set up this claim, or else abandon it as an assumption, incapable of demonstration. It has been, for some years past, my fixed habit to accept that as true which was accompanied by incontestable testimony, and that only. I might not reject at once that which was wanting in proof; but when this occurred, I held it in abeyance for further development. Should I, therefore, ask you or any one to receive as true that which

is not sustained by evidence, I certainly would lay myself open to the charge of inconsistency. To ask at the hands of others that which I will not permit them to ask at my own, would be highly ungenerous, uncharitable, and dogmatic. In view of this, I proceed to lay before you the proof upon which the *second reason* for my present Church relation rests.

1st. In Luke's history of apostolic labor, we have this record: "*And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*"—Acts xi: 26. Here, in this renowned city, the metropolis of Syria, to which Pliny gave the title, "Queen of the East," surpassed only by two others in the Roman empire —Rome and Alexandria—the followers of Christ were called "*Christians.*" And this occurred during the year Barnabas and Saul were employed there in preaching the word; and it is highly probable

that they gave this name to the disciples; and, if so, that they did it by Divine direction, which I shall presently demonstrate.

Before proceeding to prove the point here assumed, permit me to refer to the following question not unfrequently raised adverse to it: "That this name was given to the disciples by the citizens of Antioch, in derision, as a nickname." To this, I oppose the following: (1.) It is a gratuitous assumption, without the shadow of proof. And this in the settlement of a grave question only weakens the cause of the party introducing it, and tends to strengthen the opposite. (2.) The probabilities are, that had the people of the city given a name in derision as a term of reproach, they would have selected one more opprobrious, since they were famous for their scurrilous wit, and not the very appropriate, significant, and expressive appellation "*Christian*." Had they—the citizens of Antioch—desired to have given a name to the followers of the Messiah; and had they

been induced to do this from the highest respect and admiration for them, and the religion they professed; and had they been guided in their choice by their refined Greek civilization, and by the inspiration of the Infinite One, they could not have selected one so just, so unexceptionable, so comprehensive, and so all-sided in its signification as the one mentioned in the text. It is a complete circle in its meaning—an entire sphere. To be a Christian indeed, is to include within one's self all those qualities of mind and heart which the terms disciple, saint, brother, child of God, son of God, etc., express; hence the name Christian, in its orb of expression, embraces the entire sum of qualities and relations designated by these terms. This can be said of no one of them. I therefore repeat, the probabilities are, that had the citizens of Antioch given a name to the disciples in derision, it would have been one expressive of their contemptuous and scurrilous purpose, since their inventive genius was proverbial in this direction, and not

one compassing our relation to each other, to Christ, and to God.

2d. The meaning of the Greek word rendered "were called," inevitably and forever sets aside the question raised, that this "name was given as a reproach." And in the development of this position, I purpose introducing my *first* argument in demonstration of the proposition, "*That the term Christian is the only divinely authorized name by which the followers of Christ should be called.*" Now, if it can be made to appear that the original word in Acts xi: 26, translated "were called," uniformly means, in the New Testament, to impart a Divine warning, to give instruction under the guidance of inspiration; and, in the passive voice, to receive Divine monition or counsel, and, when the verb is intransitive, to be named or known by a particular appellation; I say, when these facts are made to appear, then it must follow conclusively that the term "*Christian*," given to the disciples in Antioch, was by the inspiration of God. And further: if it is made to

appear that the Greek word used in connection with the name "disciple, saint, heir," etc., rendered by our English word "*called*," does not, of necessity, mean to impart by Divine monition, then it also necessarily follows that "*Christian*" is the only name given to believers in Christ by Divine direction. This is as clear and direct statement of the points — of which there are two — to be proven, and which are indispensable to sustain the proposition, as I can give.

I shall now proceed to demonstrate the *first point*, namely: That the original word, *χρηματισαι*, rendered by the words, "*were called*," in Acts xi: 26, uniformly means, in the New Testament, to act by or receive Divine direction.

1st. I refer you to Matt. ii: 12, which reads: "And being warned (*χρηματισθεντες*) of God in a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." The history of this text is briefly as follows: Certain Magi, or wise men, were led, by the ap-

pearance of a star in the East, to Jerusalem, in search of him "who was born king of the Jews." Herod, the son of Antipater, an Idumean, was, by the authority of the Roman government, the king of the Jewish nation; and hearing the rumor that one was recently born who was heir to the throne upon which he sat, he was "greatly troubled," and resolved that this rival should be put to death. To effect this, he called the wise men who were in search of this new king, and requested them when they should find the young child to bring him word, for he was ignorant respecting the home of the infant. This he did under the plea that he might "come and worship him also." The probabilities are that the Magi agreed to his request; but He who guided them by the star in the East to where the young child and his mother were, guarded the fulfillment of His word; and before these sages had left the presence of the Messiah, to whom they paid worship and presented costly gifts, their way was made plain before them. The Divine hand

turned their feet from the palace of Herod, and led them by another way into their own country. That these men acted by Divine direction in not returning to Herod, will not be denied by any one; and yet the word translated "*were warned of God*," is from the same (χρηματιζω) that the word rendered "*were called*," in Acts xi: 26. is.

2d. In Matt. ii: 22, the following record is given: "But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God (χρηματισθεις) in a dream." The account of this text is: Mary and Joseph, the mother and reputed father of Christ, were directed by Jehovah to take the young child and make their escape into Egypt to avoid the wrath of Herod. Here they remained until word was brought by an angel that those who sought to harm the child were dead; when they, warned by a dream, returned into the land of Israel. That Joseph acted by Divine monition, in his returning from

Egypt to the land of Israel, will not be questioned; and the Greek word rendered "*being warned of God*," is from the same (χρηματιζω) one which is translated "*being warned of God*" in the 12th verse.

3d. I now refer you to Luke ii: 26, which reads: "And it was revealed (κεχρηματισμενον) unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." We are told by the inspired historian that there was in Jerusalem one "whose name was Simeon, a just and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel." This venerable servant of God, who is supposed to have been president of the Grand Sanhedrim, and "one of the most celebrated doctors and philosophers that had appeared in the Jewish nation since the time of Moses," clung with strong hope to the promises of deliverance to his countrymen—his brethren. He waited for the consolation of Israel; but age was dimming the brightness of his eyes, and weakening the strength of his frame, and he would appear to anxiously

ask the question: "Shall I live to witness the desire of my heart—the coming of the Lord's Anointed?" His anxious spirit was put to rest by being "divinely informed" by "an express communication from God," that his eyes should behold the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. This Divine communication is expressed by the word κεχρηματισμενον, which is from the same (χρηματιζω) as those already introduced, and is of like signification.

4th. I next ask your attention to Acts x: 22: "And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nations of the Jews, was warned from God (εχρηματισθη) by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee." The history of this text is: Cornelius, who sustains an interesting character in this connection, was an officer in the Roman army. He was, nevertheless, a devout, just, holy, and benevolent man, fearing God with all his house. Doubtless his mind was struggling to gain clearer conceptions of the

character of the Infinite Being; to obtain more decided evidence of the forgiveness of sins, and to look forward through a less obscuring vail to an immortal life. Here was offered a beautiful gateway to introduce to the Gentile world the Light of Life —the brightness of the Father's glory— opening upon the centurion and his kinsmen a new and more glorious realm of faith and experience. About the ninth hour of the day, he saw an angel "coming unto him," who gave him directions how to proceed so as to gain that for which he sighed. In obedience to the instruction given, he sent messengers to Joppa to invite Simon Peter to his house, who should tell him what he ought to do, that he might enjoy clearer light and firmer hope in God. Now that in all this Cornelius acted under the guidance of God, is beyond the reach of cavil even. And the words "*was warned from God*," (*εχρηματισθη*,) which assure us of this, are from the same original word (*χρηματιζω*) that those I have already quoted are.

5th. In further proof of my position, I introduce Hebrews viii: 5, which reads: "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God (κεχρηματισται) when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See (saith he) that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." By referring to the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh chapters of Exodus, you will find a detailed account of the instruction Jehovah gave to Moses respecting the construction of the tabernacle. Its size, configuration, and its court; the kind and quality of the materials of which it was to be built, were minutely given. The furniture of the sanctum and the sanctum sanctorum, the number of pieces, their names, of what to be constructed, how to be made, and where to be placed, were all set forth with particular exactness and detail. All this direction God laid before Moses in Mount Sinai, accompanying it with the following positive injunction; "And look that thou make

them after the pattern which was showed thee in the mount."—Exodus xxv: 40. There can not, it strikes me, be the shadow of a doubt that Moses built the tabernacle, and furnished it, under the especial instruction of God. And the very phrase, "*was admonished of God*," (*χρηματισαι*) which expresses this leading of the Jewish lawgiver, in his work, by the Divine hand, is from the same word (*χρηματιζω*) that those are which have been referred to.

6th. In the eleventh chapter and seventh verse of Hebrews is the following allusion to Noah and his salvation, together with his household, by obeying Divine instruction: "By faith Noah, being warned of God (*χρηματισθεις*) of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." A brief and yet comprehensive record of the event to which the text refers, may be found in Genesis, sixth chapter. The sins of the world had reached their culmination. The day of terrible retribution was approaching. Noah, in consideration of his righteousness, had

Disciples Collection
Divinity School
Library

"found grace in the eyes of the Lord." He was warned of the approaching danger, and commanded to build an ark—the plan of which God laid before him—for the salvation of himself and family. In obedience to the directions given, he and all his were saved. Permit me to ask, Can there be a question raised respecting Noah's being led in this preparation by the inspiration of the Almighty? To me it appears impossible. And yet the same word is used to express this Divine guidance of Noah that was employed in giving the name "*Christian*" to the disciples in Antioch.

7th. I will refer to one more text, and then rest my proof, predicated upon the word *χρηματιζω*, on this point. "But what saith the answer of God (*χρηματισμος*) unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal."—Rom. xi: 4. The facts to which reference is here made, may be found recorded in 1 Kings, nineteenth chapter. Elijah complained of the treachery and corruption of Israel, declaring that

he alone of all the prophets was left, and that his life was sought. To which Jehovah replies: "But I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." The word used in this text (Rom. xi: 4) signifies a response from God—a Divine answer—correcting a wrong impression in the mind of this ancient and faithful servant.

Suffer me here, in closing this part of my proof, to ask your special attention to the remarkable fact, that in Matt. ii: 12, 22; Acts x: 22; Heb. viii: 5; xi: 7; and Rom. xi: 4, the word *θεου*—"of God"—is not in the Greek; and yet our translators have supplied it as though it were, and very justly too; for the words *χρηματισθεντες*, *χρηματισθεις*, *εχρηματισθη*, *κεχρηματισαι*, *χρηματισθεις*, and *χρηματισμος*, meaning to give Divine instruction and response, clearly imply the phrase "of God." This, of itself, is very decided proof of my position. And the question naturally comes up, Why not supply the phrase "of God" in Acts xi:

26, as well as in other places where the same word occurs; and especially since there are no known conditions connected with its use on that occasion why it should not be? The passage would then read: "And the disciples were called of God Christians first in Antioch."

In introducing the preceding texts in demonstration of the point assumed, namely: *That the word χρηματιζω uniformly means, in the New Testament, to give Divine instruction, or to act under it*, I have been careful to present a brief history of each, that the meaning of the word might be clearly seen; and that it is employed in the sense I claim will not be denied by any candid and well-informed man. This being the uniform scope of the word when used by the writers of the New Testament, it conclusively follows that the disciples in Antioch were called Christians by the inspiration of God; therefore, the name Christian is divinely authorized.

I now propose asking your attention to the testimony of Dr. Adam Clark, on the

signification of the word χρηματιζω, given in his comment on Acts xi: 26. He says: "The word χρηματιζω in our common text which we translate *were called*, signifies, in the New Testament, to appoint, warn, or nominate by Divine direction. If, therefore, the name was given by *Divine* appointment, it is most likely that Saul and Barnabas were directed to give it; and that, therefore, the name Christian is from God, as well as that grace and holiness which are so essentially required and implied in the character. Before this time the Jewish converts were simply called among themselves *disciples*, that is, *learners*, *believers*, *saints*, *the Church*, or *assembly;* and by their enemies, *Nazarenes*, *Galileans*, *the men of this way* or *sect;* and perhaps by other names which are not come down to us. They considered themselves as one family, and hence the appellation of *brethren* was frequent among them. It was the design of God to make all who believed of *one heart* and *one soul*, that they might consider him as their Father, and live and love

like children of the same household. A Christian, therefore, is the highest character which any human being can bear upon earth; and to receive it from God, as those appear to have done, how glorious the title."

In this quotation, two points are admitted by the learned and able commentator, namely: 1st. That the word χρηματίζω signifies, in the New Testament, to *appoint, warn*, or *nominate* by Divine direction." 2d. That the disciples in Antioch "appear to have" received the appellation Christian "from God." Now, in conceding these, there is a virtual granting of the position I have assumed; for they substantially amount to the same proposition.

The second point in the statement of the argument, that the original word rendered *call*, in connection with the terms disciple, saint, brethren, now claims attention. This word (καλεω) means *to invite, to direct, to come, to summon, to call to any duty, to invite to be*, etc., and nowhere necessarily signifies to be *divinely instructed*, or *led by inspira-*

tion, or *named by Divine direction*. A few references will be sufficient to set this clearly before you: (1.) "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, *called* (κλητοις, from καλεω) to be saints."—Rom. i: 7. "Unto the Church of God which is in Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, *called* (κλητοις) to be saints," etc.—1 Cor. i: 2. It is evident that the meaning of the term "*call*," or "*called*," is limited to the simple idea of inviting *to be* or *to become*. Again: "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to *call* (καλειν) them brethren." — Heb. ii: 11. "For many are called, (εισι κλητοι,) but few are chosen."—Matt. xxii: 14. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that *called* (καλεσαντος) you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel."—Gal. i: 6. "For, brethren, ye have been *called* (εκλη-θητε) unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."—Gal. v: 13. It sometimes means the speaking a name or title, not by

Divine monition, as in Luke xv: 19: "And am no more worthy to be *called* (κληθῆναι) thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." In 1 Corinthians xv: 9, we read: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be *called* (καλεῖσθαι) an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." From these and numerous other texts the conclusion is irresistible that this word is never used to signify Divine monition; therefore, the question that some have raised that, since the followers of Christ were called "*disciples, saints, brethren*," etc., as well as Christians, if the one were given by inspiration then were the others also, is without any foundation; for the words used in connection with the former ("disciple," etc.) and with the latter ("*Christian*") are entirely different in their scope and meaning, as I have clearly shown. And I think you will not charge me with either egotism or dogmatism, if I now claim that I have fairly met and set aside the assertion that the appellation "Christian" was given to the disciples in Antioch

in derision; and that I have demonstrated *that this name—Christian—is the only divinely authorized appellation by which the followers of the Messiah should be called.*

A *second* reason why "*Christian*" is accepted by this brotherhood as their only religious name rests upon those texts where it is especially mentioned or else certainly implied. True, these are not numerous. Dr. Clark says: "It is worthy of remark that this name occurs in only three places in the New Testament." Now, the plain inference from this statement of the doctor's is, that, since it is so seldom mentioned in the law of the kingdom, it would be presuming rather much to claim it as the Heaven-ordained name for the disciples of Christ. Certainly those who would condemn others as presumptuous on so slight ground as this have forgotten the law which saith: "The testimony of two men is true;" and also, "That in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established."

But I will give the testimony as I find it

in the holy record. In Acts xxvi: 28, we read: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." This, assuredly, is a frank and manly expression of a truthful sentiment, the basis of which was his—Agrippa's—knowledge of, and belief in, the prophets, who spoke concerning the Messiah, and the apostle's forcible reasoning that Jesus was the Christ. It was the result of Paul's demonstration and the king's faith. But why use the term Christian instead of disciple or saint? The inference is, that the disciples or saints were generally known by that appellation, and, hence, was their common name in Cæsarea as well as in Antioch. This inference is greatly strengthened by the fact that this appellation was given to the brethren in the latter city about the year 42, and that Agrippa's confession was made about the year 62—twenty years afterward. Quite enough time for it to have been received in all the Churches, since the apostles and their co-workers in the ministry traveled extensively from city

to city, visiting the various congregations to strengthen them in the faith, and especially since it was given by Divine appointment in Antioch.

The next text I shall ask attention to, may be found by referring to 1 Peter iv: 16: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." It is evident that the saints to whom this and the succeeding letter were addressed, were known as Christians, and because of this were liable to suffer persecution. The apostle recognized them by this name; and among their enemies this was their distinctive appellation, which marked them as objects of jealous hate and bitter malignity; hence, the peculiar structure of the text: "If any man suffer as a Christian," that is, because he is known as a Christian. This was sufficient to subject him to reproach and contumely, to thrust him into prison, and to bind him to the stake.

Permit me, now, to refer you to two quotations, in which the name Christian is

clearly implied. Ephesians iii: 14, 15: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." James ii: 7: "Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?" In the former of these texts, the following points are deducible: 1st. That God has but one family, which includes all the redeemed in heaven and on earth. 2d. That the members of this family, at the time this letter was written by the inspired penman, bore the same appellation or name. 3d. That this name was Christian; for the apostle says: "Of whom," that is, of Christ, or from him, "the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Dr. Clark, in commenting on this passage, says: "*Christ* gives the name of *Christian* to all the real members of his Church upon earth; and to all the spirits of just men (saved since his advent and through his blood) in heaven." It is certainly true that the members of God's family who have gone to mansions above have no sect-

arian or party names, but are known as Christ's redeemed ones—as Christians—for of him they are called; therefore, I conclude, that, since the entire family in heaven and earth is divinely called by one name, those members still dwelling in tabernacles of clay should not assume sectional or unauthorized appellations; but cheerfully and meekly accept the one given by Infinite Wisdom.

The latter text—James ii: 7—and its connection, present these points: 1st. That those who opposed the saints, and blasphemed, were the enemies of Christ and his followers. 2d. That the disciples were called by the name which was blasphemed by their opposers. 3d. That this name blasphemed was *Christ*. The conclusion, therefore, is, that these brethren were called Christians, since this term is derived from Christ, and to be called by his name is to receive this appellation.

And further: since Christian is derived from Christ, it follows that to cast reproach upon the former is blaspheming the latter;

for he says: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The wicked persecutors of the primitive Church sought every opportunity to revile the name Christian—which must have been the distinctive appellation of the saints, else it could not have been aspersed—and because of this, were charged with blasphemy. I therefore claim that these texts sustain, with great force, the position that the title "*Christian*" was received by the ancient disciples of Christ as their only divinely appointed name; and that they were recognized by it.

A *third* reason why this Church receives the name Christian only, *rests upon the scope of its meaning.* There is, as I before remarked, no other term ever applied to the servants of Christ that includes so much, that has so wide a range as this. To be a Christian is to attain the highest character possible to any one on earth; is to be all the laws of God require. It embraces the following specialties: 1st. *Our*

union with Christ—that we are his; for none are entitled to it except such as are ingrafted into him as the branch is into the vine. To give it to any who are not thus united to him is a *misnomer*, a gross perversion of its meaning, applying it to a purpose wholly at variance with its signification. 2d. Since it expresses union with Christ it must include discipleship, as this word means *learner*, and all Christians are such. It is with them the great aim of life to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth." Christ is, through his Divine law, their spiritual teacher, and they are his pupils. The most profound student among them will not claim to have made himself familiar with all the grand and beautiful ideas and sentiments of Christian truth. There are realms of thought and experience in the *curriculum* of Christ's university above and beyond what he has yet attained. The themes of study are inexhaustible. 3d. The name Christian includes the idea of saintship, which means holiness, sanctity, since all who may truly

wear it are cleansed, sanctified; for those only are his who have his spirit, and those who have his spirit must be consecrated to him. 4th. It also embraces the idea of brotherhood; for if we are Christ's, then are we of God's household; and, hence, are members one of another in particular, bearing fraternal relations. 5th. It expresses heirship with Christ. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise," says the inspired writer. The Christian is an "heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ."

But it is unnecessary that I should enlarge; let it suffice to remark that this term (*Christian*) is a complete circle in its meaning, while all others are mere segments. It embraces the idea of faith in God and in Christ; of love and obedience to them; of charity to the brotherhood; of kindness to all men; of integrity to truth; of untiring devotion to the right; of purity and uprightness of character; and, in brief, of every grace of the spirit so pleasing in the sight of God and praise-

worthy in the sight of men. No other title applied to the followers of Christ expresses so much. Disciple, in its simple meaning, signifies *learner*, and was commonly given to those who became acquainted with and adopted the sentiments of another; hence those who learned and entertained the philosophy of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Plato, were called their disciples. Saint means sanctified, holy, pure; hence, was applied to the devout of the Old Testament. Brethren, or brother, indicates the relation each member of the same household sustains to the others; and as the disciples formed but one family, they were called brethren.

It is also true that the different names distinguishing the various Protestant denominations are sectional and fragmentary in their signification. Each is expressive of some one or more doctrinal sentiment; hence, is purely sectional. The leading idea expressed by the name "*Episcopalian Church*" is its peculiar form of ecclesiastical government. And so with the name "*Presbyterian Church.*" "*Methodist Episco-*

pal Church" relates mainly to its form of government, and the circumstances of its first organization. "*Wesleyan Methodist Church*" signifies that it has adopted the true sentiments of John Wesley. The prominent idea couched in the name "*Baptist Church*" is that all legal members of Christ's kingdom are immersed believers; that this is the initiatory process into the household of faith. "*Unitarian Church*" is expressive of a belief in the unity of God in contradistinction to the Trinity, or a belief of Unity in unity instead of Trinity in unity. "*Universalist Church*" signifies faith in the final holiness and happiness of all God's intelligent creatures. The leading idea expressed by the name "Lutheran Church" is, that its members receive the fundamental sentiments advocated by Martin Luther, the great and successful reformer. And what I have said of those names mentioned is true of the entire catalogue of denominational appellations, excepting "*Christian*."

You will observe that I do not call in

question the leading sentiments expressed by the terms Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, Wesleyan, Baptist, Unitarian, Universalist, and Lutheran. These are not under review at present. The point I am aiming to demonstrate, is their want of catholicity—their sectional and fragmentary signification. Suppose I admit the sentiments expressed by these several appellations to be true, then, Episcopalian including one leading idea, and Presbyterian another, and neither one of these names embracing both ideas, it necessarily follows that they are fragmentary in their meaning, and, hence, sectional; for that which includes only a *part* of the *whole* is of necessity *sectional*. It *can not* be otherwise, unless it can be proven that the axiom, "*The whole is greater than any of its parts*," *is not true*. The same may be said of the terms "*Baptist*" and "*Unitarian;*" for they express different sentiments, and neither appellation includes both sentiments; hence, each must be fragmentary in its signification. And this is true of all.

Further still: take all these denominational names together, and admit the leading sentiments they set forth to be true—which, by the way, I should be very unwilling to do—they would only measure a few degrees in the great circle of religious truth. This can not be said of the Divine appellation, "*Christian.*" Its complete comprehensiveness, its catholicity, no one will hazard his candor and reputation by denying. It bears upon every feature the impress of Divine approval. Look at it from every point of observation you please; try it by every honorable test, and still it stands unrivaled as the name of Christ's disciples, having been given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Regarding it in this light, we, as the followers of the Messiah, accept it as our *only name.*

I have now given you my *second reason* for being a member of the Christian Church, and it only remains for me, in closing this letter, to refer to two objections that are not unfrequently raised against our receiving this name only.

1st. It is very emphatically asserted by some to be "presumption, and therefore unauthorized." Respecting our authority for this action, we are entirely willing to rest the case upon the evidence already submitted. If it is not sufficient, then is testimony valueless. As it regards the next item: if it is presumption to call one's self a "Christian," then is it presumption to be a Christian; but if it is not arrogance —as this is one meaning of presumption— to be a Christian, then is it not arrogance to be called such. And as it is the acknowledged duty of all to be Christians, it certainly follows that all have the right or privilege of being called or calling themselves by that title; for any one may, without in the least presuming, be called or call himself by that appellation expressive of what he is. I readily grant that, for any one who has not the spirit of Christ to appropriate that name to himself, it would be unreasonable and arrogant; but for one who is united by living faith to the Head of the Church, to receive and be known by

it is reasonable, appropriate, and Scriptural, and not presumption.

2d. It is claimed that we "have no right to take a general name, and appropriate it to a special organization." To this I reply: (1.) We have not laid an embargo on this name, interdicting all others from using it. They have all the right to it we have; but if they choose to be known by some other appellation, the fault is not ours. (2.) If a number, or even a majority of the members of a family, should choose to call themselves by some other than their patronymic, while the residue should adhere to the ancestral name, could the former, with the slightest show of justice, arraign and condemn the latter for this faithful allegiance to their paternal title? Certainly not. So, if we choose to call ourselves Christians, which is derived from Christ, the "author and finisher of our faith," and others should make a different selection, we plead "*not guilty*," in that we have remained faithful in our loyalty to the household name. (3.) It must be remembered that, although

this is a general name, it is no less a specific or particular name; for each disciple of Christ may be designated by it as well as the whole brotherhood. I therefore think the allegation that we are overgenerous to ourselves, is wanting in all the essential elements of truth.

Fraternally yours.

Letter III.

My Dear Sir and Brother:

I again resume my pen that I may lay before you a *third reason* for my being a member of the Christian Church, which may be thus stated: *Christian Character is the only test of Christian fellowship.* This is one of the cardinal principles—one of the landmarks, as well as a distinctive feature—of the denomination; and one to which we purpose adhering faithfully, and which we propose maintaining, both by precept and example, with unyielding fidelity. It has been, and still is, a source of great pleasure and rejoicing to me, amid the shifting scenes of life, to acknowledge *this* as the basis of Christian fellowship, and to be associated with those who cordially accept it as the platform of brotherhood. Nor have the objections which some have raised against it as a sure and reliable

foundation of religious fellowship, weakened, in the least, my confidence in its all-sufficiency. Indeed, they have rather tended to strengthen my reliance upon it by inducing investigation, which has resulted in more clearly developing its entire fitness for the purpose mentioned; and in more certainly establishing its Divine approval. With this deliberate and firm conviction of both head and heart, I submit to you, with great pleasure, this basis of Christian association, accompanied with some of its arguments and illustrations, trusting that you will give the whole (the sentiment and its proof) a patient, thorough, and candid investigation.

Permit me, in opening the discussion of this question, to state the following proposition, as the *first* point in the argument, namely: *Christian character is the true test of Christian fellowship.* This includes a part of the cardinal principle which was submitted in the opening of this letter, and which is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian Church. The

residue, as well as some of the terms of the proposition itself, will be introduced and argued in a subsequent letter. I do this to avoid, as far as possible, all complexity, that you may obtain a plain, truthful, matter-of-fact view of the whole question of Christian fellowship. And I need hardly remind you of its importance. For ages past it has been a theme of anxious and earnest inquiry with all thoughtful, loving, Christian men. From the time the Savior gave birth to it in these words: "That they all may be one as we are one," till now, few subjects have been more frequently the burden of holy prayer than this. Every renewed heart has felt it, and every Christian tongue has uttered it. It has gone up like holy incense to the Infinite One from millions of altars; and no true soul has ever offered an opposing sentiment. Learned and able men have written and spoken upon it, and plead for it, and thirsted for the day to come when man shall be received into full fraternal relation for his manhood in Christ; when there

shall be "one fold and one Shepherd." And as we are brethren, having one Father, one hope, and one home, let us go through the investigation of the subject now before us with true Christian frankness.

I now turn to the proposition, *Christian character is the true test of Christian fellowship.*

On this, questions like the following may be asked: "Does this test comprehend enough? Is it sufficiently broad, and yet specific? Will it guard, on the one hand, against latitudinarianism, and, on the other, against sectarianism?" To these, and to all questions of the same class that may be raised upon this proposition, but one truthful answer can be returned, to which all in whom the love of God reigns supreme will give their hearty concurrence. The answer is: Most certainly the test is sufficiently comprehensive, broad, and specific, and will safely guard against both latitudinarianism and sectarianism. If it is not, however, then is it entirely useless that any man or men should attempt to

make one, the lines of which shall be more distinctly developed, or the standard of which shall be more elevated or more accurately graduated. To claim the right and ability to construct one better adapted to determine the conditions of Christian brotherhood, is unmitigated arrogance; and none but the superstitious, ignorant, or dogmatic bigot will defend any such claim. It might be maintained where darkness and tyranny sit intrenched behind despotic power, holding the reins of authority, lording it over men's consciences, crushing the freedom of inquiry and thought, and strangling the uprising of a broad, generous manhood; but where light breaks in upon society, pouring its rays through all its channels, and rendering the duties and relations of its members clear and unmistakable, it can not long survive. And in proportion as truth prevails, so must this claim give way, yielding its grasp upon its victims, until they walk forth free men, ready to love and fellowship others for what they are, and not for what they pro-

fess, and be loved and fellowshiped in return on the same condition.

I desire, at this point, to call your attention to this truth, that, in many of the transactions of life, we are controlled by the principle which is the vitality of this test, namely: the character that such a one may sustain, or the quality of such and such an article. If circumstances made it necessary for you to commit your business affairs into the hands of another, would you not be guided, in the selection of your agent, by the character you deemed requisite to him who should occupy that relation to you? Undoubtedly you would. Hence your action in the premises would be determined by this principle, if nothing else contravened.

Again: Should it become necessary, or should you wish to form a partnership with some one, for the purpose of trade, manufacture, or commerce, would you not be controlled, in your choice of a partner, by the character he sustained? If the selection should lie between two who might

desire to be thus associated with you, it could be determined judiciously only on this principle. The ability to give in detail the regulations and laws that enter into and govern any one of these departments of industry, would not be sufficient of itself. I do not say that this is not a weighty element in the qualification of a commercial man; but I do maintain that it alone is not enough. Nor would any careful business man endanger his reputation, or jeopardize his finances, by making one wanting in all else but this a partner in his firm. Is he prompt, discreet, truthful, and trustworthy? Does he possess ability, and manly, incorruptible moral integrity? These, or similar questions, you would require answered affirmatively, for these are essential constituents of the character that would command confidence. And he who sustained all these would be your first choice, other things being equal.

Were you seeking a location which you desired to make a home for yourself and for your children after you, would not the facts

as to health, fertility, and trade be regarded as considerations wielding a strong influence in determining your choice? And would not the reputation of the citizens for truth, industry, morality, and intelligence be weighty considerations in settling the question of location? Most assuredly they would. And they are such as no thoughtful, sagacious, and prudent man is likely to overlook. His questions would run about thus: Is it healthy, fertile, and convenient to trade? Are the people temperate, industrious, moral, and intelligent? Settle these inquiries, and you settle also the question of location; for they determine the character of the place, and the character in turn controls the choice, if nothing else intervenes. It is the only true test, and to depart from it would be to decline the certain means of safety, and to render one liable to errors and mistakes difficult to remedy.

I further remark that what is true respecting the power of character of persons or places in determining action is also true

of the quality or property of things. Your value of a tree in your orchard is measured by the quality and quantity of the fruit it bears; and you are influenced in its care and culture by this value, which is graduated by the quality of the tree. And so are you directed in your attention to, and care of, your horse in his stall, and in the selection of stock for your farm, and also in the purchase of various useful articles. It is the quality that determines action, when other things are equal. But it is not necessary that I should pursue this line of illustration further.

The question I desire now to press is, if character and quality are conditions that enter so largely in determining our actions in the business affairs of life, why may they not be regarded as legitimate and certain tests or conditions governing us in our religious bearing toward others, and especially in our fellowship with them? If there is any good reason why they should not, I confess myself unable to to see it—wholly unacquainted with it. I claim that char-

acter—as this includes essential properties—when qualified by the term Christian, is the true basis of Christian fellowship. This, I am persuaded, will appear evident if you will but weigh carefully and candidly the following considerations.

1st. *The test is sufficiently specific.* There is no ambiguity in it. When it is claimed that such a one sustains a *Christian character*, the idea intended to be conveyed can no more be misapprehended than it can when it is affirmed that such another one has a vicious character. The terms virtuous and benevolent, or vicious and avaricious, when applied to any one, do not more certainly designate special qualities or properties of character, than the term Christian. And yet we are all satisfied with the power and specialties of these words in defining character, and are at no loss in determining the class to which he, to whom any one of them may justly be applied, belongs; nor are we puzzled in deciding the moral and social relation this may place him in to us. Nor will it be maintained that these are more

distinct and positive in their signification of character than the term Christian. Indeed, they possess far less power in compass than it; for they, taken separately, included only one element of character, while it embraces every quality of mind and heart essential to constitute one a member of the household of faith. If a man is a Christian, he is just what the law of Christ requires, and is entitled to your cordial fellowship; and he who withholds it, knowing him to be such, certainly is inexcusable. He can, by the authority of the truth, make no further demands of him. It is a finality, and all other questions must yield to it. You accept him for what he now is. If the Father has received him, so must you, and so must all who love Christ. To admit that one is a Christian, is granting that he is in fellowship with the Father and the Son; and to submit other tests to such a one as conditions of fellowship, is the summit of incongruity. No catalogue of questions, or articles of faith, crammed and packed to their very brim with straight out-and-out

"orthodoxy," can more clearly and specifically point out the genuine landmarks of spiritual excellence, than the simple interrogation, Is he a Christian? truthfully answered, He is. And I very seriously doubt whether they, plied by all the ingenuity and address of a Clerical Council or a Session of Elders, would not fall far short of it, in measuring the breadth and depth of the soul's love to God and to Christ.

2d. A *second* consideration, which will strengthen the proposition that *Christian character is the true test of Christian fellowship* is, that it gives a *basis sufficiently broad.*

Now, it is just and right that every man should be governed in his appreciation of others by that principle which will induce him to recognize and acknowledge whatever real worth others may possess. This is an equitable and safe rule, because it accepts men at their full value, neither giving a *premium* nor demanding *discount.* We ask, at the hands of our fellow-men, at least this much for ourselves, and expect that they will grant it. To demand more

is unjust, and to give less is equally so. He who does either of these, though it be the result of ignorance, is reprehensible, unless he can show that this want of information was no fault of his. And if such is held responsible, except on the condition of inevitable ignorance, how much more meritorious of censure is he who sees the moral and spiritual sincerity and uprightness of another, but declines recognizing him by a genuine fraternal expression, because he stands outside the limits that describe his Church, or because he does not accept some of his religious dogmas. This would be making a mere party relation or belief in metaphysical, abstract theological questions, enunciated by an Ecclesiastical Council or Assembly, the basis of brotherhood, and that, too, in violation of a principle which we hold is binding upon others respecting ourselves, namely: That we are to receive full credit for what we are, and be treated accordingly. If we possess real manhood in Christ Jesus, we look for others to frankly acknowledge this, and give us the

hand of fellowship. To say that a Christian man disregards the favorable opinion of others, and holds their fellowship as a subject of very light and trifling moment, is certainly wanting in veracity. A pretender may ostensibly or really assume such a position of indifference, but a true man never. Justice to himself and to the cause he may have espoused will not permit him. And the question now is, Can a rule or principle be right which will lead him to deny that to others, who occupy the same plane of character with himself, which he claims as due from them to him? There can be, I am sure, but one answer to this. That which induces such result must be radically wrong; for it contravenes this clause in the Divine constitution: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." But the principle that places Christian brotherhood on Christian character is entirely free from these objections, and all similar ones. It is broad enough to receive all the good,

pure, and upright dwelling upon the footstool of God. Not one such is excluded from the bosom of brotherly love by it. The humble follower of the Messiah, living on the outer rim of civilization is included, as well as he who dwells within its "hub." The "orthodox" (?) cylinder, consecrated by the hands of bishops and clergy, may not have smoothed out of him all heterodox (?) wrinkles, nor have rolled out his religious ideas so as to fill the authorized standard; it matters not; if he has "Christ formed in him, the hope of glory," if he bears the peaceable fruits of righteousness, this test admits him to full fellowship. It is, in this respect, a complete circle, and not a mere segment. It will raise him who rests upon it so far above party lines of latitude and longitude, that they will shrink into insignificant shreds. It will take from the eye of the soul the vail that limited its vision to the few whose religious opinions have been cut, carved, and whittled so as to fit every angle, whether acute or obtuse, and every curve, however tortuous, of a

particular creed, and, instead thereof, will disclose a glorious brotherhood encircling all who are the children of God by a holy life. It completely nonsuits sectarianism, and leaves it to pay the cost of its own illegal prosecution. It leaves all free to exercise, in the largest sense, the highest and noblest element of Christianity, namely: *charity*, *love*. It bids us go forth and find a brother in whomsoever faith in God the Father, and in Christ the Savior, sits enthroned; in whomsoever holy love has sprung up, and bears the fruits of righteousness and peace. Nor is its measure filled by a half-way, outside, street fellowship. Its spirit and voice are, Welcome to the altar of worship, to the Church, the household of faith, and to the Lord's table, as brethren, all whose characters are modeled after the great Teacher's. It rebukes, with unmistakable plainness, that spirit which hails you as a brother out in the commons or in the public park, but when it enters the pew, the pulpit, or draws near the communion table, is as entirely innocent of any

knowledge of you whatever as it is of the veriest stranger or heretic. It holds such fellowship precisely as a true philanthropist does the charity of one who is vociferous and voluble in words of sympathy and benevolence till his purse is touched, and then is as dumb as a statue, and cold as the heart of an iceberg.

Such, then, is the breadth, the catholicity of this test of fellowship, that not one of Christ's disciples, however poor and obscure, or elevated and renowned, is excluded from its realm. It is the only one against which the charge of sectionalism can not lie. For this basis I plead, and upon it I profess to stand: and to no other can I ever submit, nor will I. The sentiments of head and heart utterly forbid it.

3d. In further support of the proposition, permit me to refer to a *third* consideration, namely: *The test is sufficiently restricting;* that is, it confines us in the exercise of this grace of the heart within just limits, beyond which we may not go. It permits us to extend our fellowship to

such only as sustain a Christian character. More than this it does not require; nor will less fill its measure. I am, therefore, under no obligation whatever, by this rule, to give the hand of Christian brotherhood to any whose life is not Christlike. Hence, the objection raised by some against this condition of fellowship, *that it opens too wide a door*, is entirely without foundation in fact. It does not fling open the gates and say to the debauchee: Come, enter this temple, and indulge freely in your midnight orgies. Nor does it say to the profane and profligate: You are welcome to these sacred courts with all your blasphemy and shameless wickedness, boiling and seething like a sea of fire within and without you. Nor does it even admit to the circle of Christian brotherhood those whose souls are so beclouded with sectarian prejudice that scarcely a solitary ray of Divine love can find its way into them, though they may be as rigidly orthodox as John Calvin or Jonathan Edwards. The door of admission, I apprehend, is none too lib-

eral. It is as "strait" as "the gate" and "narrow" as "the way" which the Savior exhorts us to strive to enter in, and which but few find. Neither position, nor mere profession, nor orthodox relation, nor breadth of phylacteries will admit within this "strait gate." He who enters it, and claims the benefit of the provisions within, is expected to show a clean record—to present a character bearing the Divine imprint. Such as are stamped with the image of Christ are regarded as "legal tender from God to us;" and only such. It therefore as effectually guards against latitudinarianism on the one hand as it does against sectarianism on the other. Howsoever widely it may throw the mantle of generous Christian sympathy and compassion over the deviations of humanity, it spreads the robe of Christian brotherhood over those who produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness; and those only. This certainly brings our fellowship within sufficiently restricted limits. I am sure it will amply meet the sentiments of both in-

tellect and heart of all who have formed their religious faith and practice after the teaching of Him who rebuked the spirit of proscription that occasionally showed itself among his immediate disciples, in these words: "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." And then, as if to give the most liberal plan, consistent with truth, for future action, adds: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." I remark again that this test of brotherhood draws the lines of fellowship with adequate closeness, which none could desire more restricted, unless his ideas of religion have been dwarfed by the dogmas of a creed and his affections circumscribed by party drill. Now take these three considerations, which I have aimed to elucidate briefly, together with others that might be mentioned and which your own fruitful mind will suggest, and view them in the light of the word and spirit of the Scriptures, and they will be

found giving strong and decided support to the doctrine that *Christian character is the true basis of Christian fellowship.*

A *second* point in the argument is, *that Christian character is the* ONLY *true test of Christian fellowship.* This I propose demonstrating, by showing that every other basis that has been submitted, upon which Christians of all denominations might meet and form one brotherhood, has signally failed to secure this end. *First.* Permit me to refer to the assumed right of priestly authority to dictate terms of faith, as one of the plans resorted to by which to make certain fraternal unity among all who professed to be the disciples of Christ, and by which, also, to maintain that unity. This scheme has been tried until all its resources have been exhausted. For more than nine centuries it, clothed with the sanctity of religion, and sustained by the most powerful kings and nobles of the earth, used its vast enginery to force men within the limits of religious faith prescribed by its authority, and to compel them to remain there

without question. Never did the sentinels upon the walls of a beleaguered city guard with more unceasing vigilance its safety, than this hierarchy, from the Pope down through all the clerical grades to the veriest monk in his cloistered cell, has watched, that this unity of the Church, as modeled by itself, be kept inviolate. Never did a miser guard his gold, or a hungry tiger his prey, with more pertinacity than did this ecclesiastical power its religious heritage, lest heresy, as it might please to decide, should creep in, and find a tongue to speak and a voice to be heard. The priesthood was clothed with special powers and prerogatives. It was theirs to command, and it was the people's to obey, without the right or privilege to question. Priests said to this one, "Go," and he went, and to that one, "Come," and he obeyed. They commanded men to believe this or that, and they did, not daring to deny. Before their authority the most powerful kings and potentates trembled like reeds shaken by the wind. To them belonged the pre-

rogative of dictating what men should believe, and what they should not. They determined all questions of orthodoxy and heresy. Thought and conscience were made yield to their dictation. They issued articles of faith as so many coins bearing their signature; and the people were not permitted to test them, and learn for themselves whether they were genuine or counterfeit. And were there signs of an upheaving which would disturb this graveyard unity, this lifeless quiet, how quickly were they suppressed. For centuries the freedom of thought was strangled and the enkindlings of religious liberty smothered. He who dared think beyond the limits meted out by this hierarchy was sure to fall, riven and blasted by the lightning of its power. Such were John Huss, of Bohemia, Jerome, of Prague, and Bishops Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer. The power of excommunicating not only from the Church, but from heaven itself, claimed by this *mitered* and sceptered priesthood, held the millions in abeyance. It hung

like an impending cloud, threatening and terrific, over them, beneath which they shrank and cowered like slaves; and kings, rather than brave it, would kiss the dust from the pontifical feet, and bare their backs to the biting and lacerating scourge. But if ecclesiastical power and authority failed to press down and crush out freedom of religious thought and investigation, then was the arm of civil authority called forth. Hence, the people not only beheld the threatenings of excommunication and the terrible evils it entailed, but also dark, dank, and loathsome prisons glared upon them, whose solid walls shut out the noise of the world, and whose bolted and barred doors, when once closed upon their victims, never opened to them again, except at the will of him to whose dictation they must unreservedly bow, else suffer all the horrors of a death by piecemeal. These were the engines of power employed to tighten around the head and heart of humanity the bands of priestly faith, and to drive in the screws of Popish rule. And all these

agencies were resorted to, it is claimed, that the Church might be kept free from heresy, and remain one brotherhood, united upon one basis. That it was the aim of this *hierarchy* to bring all within its realm of power, and thus form one fraternity, can not be denied, how much soever we may denounce the means employed as despotic, tyrannical, corrupt, and antichristian. And yet all these agencies, potent as they were, failed to secure the end proposed. During this long night of terror and oppression there were forces gathering, slowly but surely, which were destined to convulse this *spiritual despotism*, and wrench the bands of superstition and servile ignorance from millions. The voices of the Bohemian and his coadjutor, Jerome of Prague, though quenched in the fires kindled by the decree of the Council of Constance, were ordained to be heard and echoed in after ages. The work that fell from their hands crisped by the flames, was destined to be grasped by others under more favorable conditions, and carried forward to a glorious comple-

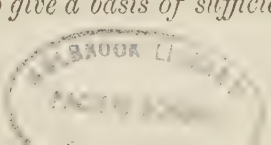
tion. The Augustine monk of Wittemberg — Luther — was led, no doubt, by Providence, step by step, in his opposition to priestly usurpation and corruption, until he found himself arrayed against, and in fearful struggle with, the entire Papal authority and power. And nobly did he sustain the strife. He was more than a match for the haughty Cardinal Cajetan de Vio, at Augsburg, the courtly and crafty legate, Charles Miltitz, and the princes, electors, and ecclesiastical dignitaries composing the Diet of Worms. This absolute despotism of Roman Catholicism, unmitigated by one solitary popular right or constitutional privilege, with its sleepless espionage, could not always hold its religious grasp upon the throats of the people. The breach was made, and could not be closed up. Rent after rent has gone crashing through its dominion of power, until it now exists as a mere wreck of its former strength. Its fulminations, once dreaded by kings and people more than the ravages of the pestilence or the calamities of war, are now re-

garded as lightly by nine-tenths of the civilized world as the babblings of a demented crone.

It is evident, from the history of the past, that the asserted right of priestly authority to prescribe terms of faith as a basis upon which all Christians might meet in sincere, unfeigned fellowship, has signally failed. It has been tested with the utmost rigor, and has fallen immeasurably short of securing the result aimed at. The reasons for this are obvious. It did not seek to purify, elevate, and enlarge the soul, by giving it free access to the inspired word, exhorting it to draw near the great heart of Infinite Love, through Christ; but, instead thereof, furnished it with ghostly, superstitious, and monkish legends. It did not seek to break the fetters of sin and ignorance from the soul, bidding it enjoy the freedom of the children of God, its Heaven-ordained right; but only added new bands and screws, by which it might be held in bondage the more securely. It did not labor to awaken the conscience,

quicken its sensibilities, and strengthen its powers, placing it as a sentinel at the door of the heart; but aimed rather to weaken its forces, restrain its growth, and silence its voice. Instead of guiding man in holy reverence toward God, in the name of Jesus, and leading him to obey noble and generous duties toward his fellows, it compelled him to offer supplication to canonized saints, repeat rituals, and do penance. It dwarfed the whole man. Its plan was opposed to the higher law. It set its face against the freedom of thought and investigation, and, hence, against the advance of true religion and the progress of civilization. These are some of the reasons why it failed to give the Christian world a common basis of religious fellowship.

Secondly. I shall now refer to *creeds* or articles of faith, as they are called, drawn up by uninspired men, and sanctioned by Councils, Assemblies, or Conferences, as bonds of Christian union and conditions of fellowship; and shall aim to prove that *they have entirely failed to give a basis of sufficient*



breadth to receive all who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And here, suffer me to remark, that I wage no war with the piety of many who adhere to creeds. It is with the latter I now have to do, as terms of Christian brotherhood, and not with the former.

My *first reason* in proof of the proposition that creeds, as well as priestly authority, have come far short of securing fellowship among all Christians, is, *that they compel a restrained study of the Scriptures.* That clear and liberal conceptions of the character of God, of his will respecting us, of Jesus Christ our Teacher and Redeemer, and of the pure, elevating truths he revealed of religion, are essential to a generous, enlarged fellowship, will not be denied. And that an unrestricted study of the word of God is indispensable, that we may secure these clear and liberal ideas, is equally undeniable. It matters not what branch of knowledge one proposes studying, he must commence and pursue it, free from all bias of mind, or ulterior restraints, if he would

gain the truth. The largest liberty should be claimed and conceded. This is granted in the investigation of the sciences of astronomy, geology, natural philosophy, etc. If a student in one of these fields of thought makes a new discovery, or develops a new point in any law or fact already known, all that is demanded of him is, that he clearly demonstrate this new truth or fact. He does not enter upon and prosecute his researches under the restraints of old dogmas of the schools, beyond the limits of which he dare not push his investigation, or the truth of which he must not question only under the penalty of being excommunicated from civilized society. In consequence of this positive freedom—this large liberty of inquiry and research—many new and valuable and astonishing discoveries, in various departments of knowledge, have been made within the past few years. New truths and facts have been developed, and old ideas resolved, from which have been eliminated errors that had greatly obscured their beauty and fitness. Now what is true re-

specting the state of the mind essential to the successful pursuit of scientific knowledge, is equally true touching the condition of mind requisite to gain true religious knowledge. In each case the largest freedom of inquiry must be permitted. This principle being conceded—and I see not on what just ground it can be controverted—the question arises, Whither shall the inquirer after Christian truth go, but to Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?" He is preeminently the light of the world, as well as the "wisdom of God." To him he who would become wise unto salvation must go. It is his privilege and duty to sit at the feet of a Divine Teacher, and not at the feet of any human. And no man has a right to interpose aught between him and his truthful Instructor. But the question may be asked, Do not creeds tell him to go to Christ and learn of him? Certainly; but, at the same time, they shout into his ears their articles of faith, until their din almost drowns the voice of Him who speaks

from heaven. They tell him to learn of Jesus, but at the same time inform him that he must learn what *they* teach. They acknowledge the Scriptures to be the only infallible rule of faith and life, yet will exclude from Christian fellowship him who dares not think as fallible men say. They tell him to learn of Christ, but at the same time have measured, weighed, and labeled what he must learn, or else be cast out and branded as a heretic. Now, what state of mind do these induce, in which to gain clear and liberal views of the character of the Infinite One, of Jesus the Son of God—the Savior—and of the all-embracing and glorious truths he poured upon the world? You might as well hoodwink a man, and then command him to walk abroad without stumbling, by your giving his elbow an occasional nudge or pull, as to expect him, thus hedged in by dogmas, to gain this knowledge. You might as well put stained glasses upon his eyes, and then ask him to examine and appreciate all the lights and shades of color, as to

thrust before his mental vision your articles of faith, and then bid him, with entire freedom, learn the beauty and harmony of truth, as, link after link, it stretches out in endless perspective. What, then, is the state of mind in which he should come to Christ, and learn of him? He should forsake all other teachers for him. He must come near to him, and lay his mind open, so as to receive the impressions of his truth, as it flowed from him, without the mixture of error. He must learn of the Divine Teacher from the Divine Teacher himself, as he speaks in the pure, Heaven-inspired records of his life, and in the writings of those who were divinely qualified and commissioned to bear testimony of him to the world. He who thus comes will not be turned away empty. But he who is bound by the dogmas of a creed, can not approach Christ as the great Teacher in this state of mind. He is in a manner compelled to interpret the teaching of Jesus and his inspired witnesses by the articles of faith to which he has subscribed.

I therefore claim that creeds necessitate a restricted study of the Scriptures; and that in proportion as the mind is trammeled in their study, so will the conceptions of the character of the Father, of the benevolence, compassion, and full completeness of Christ, and of the deep, broad, and generous spirit of his teachings, be restricted; and in proportion as these conceptions are limited, so will the spirit and sentiment of Christian fellowship be narrowed down. Hence, I draw the conclusion, that creeds do not give a basis of Christian brotherhood of sufficient breadth and length.

My *second reason* in further proof of the proposition is, *that creeds restrain him who bows to their authority in his growth in Christian truth.* This may appear at first view only a restatement, in different terms, of the former reason. If, however, you will reflect upon it for a moment you will discover that it suggests a new train of thought yet connected to the former, and harmonizing with it. The *first* may be regarded as the antecedent, and the *second* as the conse-

quent; for a restricted study of Christian truth, or any truth, must result in a restricted growth in that truth.

You are not to infer from the terms "growth in the truth," that I entertain the sentiment that truth itself grows; that to-day it is a youth, and a decade of years hence a vigorous, full-grown man. It is infinite, and can not be augmented. I grant that link after link may be and is developed or unfolded to the mind. Nor do I wish to be understood by the phrase "his growth in the truth," to convey the idea that what he holds as truth to-day will of necessity be laid aside next year as false or useless. The errors he now entertains, he may in the future grow out of; but this can not be said of him respecting the truth. Out of it he can not grow, since what was truth in ages past is such now, and will eternally be. He may recede from it, or reject it, or only partially perceive it; but to claim that he may grow out of or beyond it, is as absurd as to assert that the vision may grow beyond the light; or that the

thoughts may finally extend beyond the infinite; or that the hearing may travel beyond the vibration of the atmosphere. What I mean by *growth in Christian truth* is, 1st. A clearer perception of that which may have been only partially apprehended; and as this goes on, erroneous ideas that may have found their way into the mind will disappear from it, that is, no longer control it. 2d. A discovery of that which may have been hitherto unknown to the mind. This may suffice as a definition of what I mean by the phrase, *growth in Christian truth.*

It will not be maintained, I think, that even the wisest theologians have learned all that is possible to be known of that Divine message which the Father has been pleased in the fullness of his love to communicate to the world. Looking at it, is like looking at a fine landscape painting. The eye may soon glance over the picture; but to fully understand its expressive beauty, and the harmony of all its parts, it must be studied. Nor must he who would know

its excellence and truthfulness confine himself to one position alone from which to study it, but should view it from all available stand-points. Nor must there be obstructions in the way, preventing a clear and close survey; but the largest freedom, in securing the most favorable circumstances by which to obtain the end desired, should be sought. So it is in the study of Christian truth. It must be viewed from all available points of observation. Nor must the mental vision be impeded or dimmed by the stereotyped decrees or dogmas of any uninspired man or council of men. I do not say that the opinions of the wise and good should be disregarded or treated with indifference. This would be supercilious affectation. When the thoughts and sentiments of the learned and candid man are presented as suggestions, statements of truth, and arguments, then should they have all the weight to which they are entitled. But when they come in the form of a creed or articles of faith, being a finality on the point of doc-

trine they enunciate, beyond the limits of which investigation must not be pushed, nor their sentiments called in question only under penalty of excommunication, then do they become hinderances to growth in Christian truth; and, hence, should never be subscribed to. Not only do they obstruct this growth, but, on the same principle, impede the development of new truth. If a company of men should draw certain lines of latitude and longitude, and number them, inclosing a comparatively limited section of a hemisphere, and then should say to you: Go forth and explore the earth, and make yourself acquainted with the geography of its surface; but you must not travel beyond the lines we have marked out and labeled; neither must you question their accuracy, nor discuss their merits, except it be to bear testimony to their precision; would you not hold these conditions as greatly obstructing your growing in a knowledge of the earth's surface, and also your acquiring any new facts respecting it? It could be regarded in no other light.

Such is precisely the relation that creeds hold to one's growing "in the knowledge of the truth." They imperatively set limits to thought, saying, Thus far shalt thou go, but no further. This is the hight of arrogance, unless they set up the claim, and can make it good by the clearest evidence, that the whole of religious truth is compassed by their articles of faith. I am strongly inclined to the opinion that very few, if any, will assert that He whose ways are past finding out can be defined in comparatively few words; that the character of Him who came down from "heaven not to do his own will, but the will of Him who sent him," can be set forth in a few sentences; and that the whole theory and practice of the religion taught by the Son of God, and his inspired witnesses, can be meted out in a few articles of faith. And yet this must be assumed and maintained, else the charge that they restrain his growing in the truth who yields to their dictation, lies against them with a force that can not be fairly met and turned aside.

The argument I would submit upon the preceding is this: That whatever restricts the growth of the soul in the knowledge of the truth proportionately restricts the development of its sympathies and affections; and that in proportion to their want of development, so will its (the soul's) fellowship be limited. But creeds do prevent this growth of the soul by denying to it freedom of thought, and, therefore, utterly fail to furnish a basis of sufficient breadth for the brotherhood of all Christians.

My *third reason*, that creeds have failed to give a religious platform of adequate liberality, upon which all the disciples of Christ might meet in fellowship, *rests upon their practical workings.* What are their results? What is their history for the last fifteen centuries? What is their record *pro* and *con.*? Let the facts speak for themselves. To do this, I propose that a brief survey of their history be taken. Leaving out of view that one usually called the Apostles' Creed, and sometimes ascribed to them, but without suffi-

cient authority to establish the claim, and also the one supposed to have been drawn up by Athanasius, which fact is now called in question by the highest authority, let us refer to the one framed by the Council of Nice assembled in Bithynia. This assembly of bishops was called by the Emperor Constantine, in 325, for the purpose of quelling the controversy then fiercely raging between Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, and his adherents, on the one hand, and Alexander, the bishop of that city, and those who entertained his sentiments, on the other. It is not my province in this letter to speak of the merits or demerits of the doctrine advocated by either party; but to show that the efforts of this Council to construct a creed upon which harmony of sentiment and feeling might be restored, and the bond of brotherhood secured to all who loved God with the whole heart, entirely failed.

This celebrated Council, composed, according to Eusebius, of two hundred and fifty bishops, but according to Socrates,

of three hundred and eighteen, after a protracted session of two months, composed a confession of faith, consisting of twenty canons or articles, by which it proposed settling points of dispute, calming religious tumult, and restoring the harmony of Christian fellowship. But in these it signally failed. True, it condemned the doctrine entertained by Arius—and this was the main question before the Council—and banished him, compelling his abettors, among whom were many distinguished for their superior learning and genius as well as for their rank and station, to either subscribe to this confession of faith or else share a like fate with him. But did this restore harmony, and calm the religious conflict, by giving a basis of sufficient breadth to receive all who were struggling for a higher life in the Infinite Father and in Christ Jesus? Certainly not; for the sentence pronounced against Arius by the Council of Nice was, in 330, set aside by the Emperor Constantine, the banished presbyter recalled, and subsequently his doctrine estab-

lished by the Councils of Arminium, Seleucia, and Syrmium. Each party, as it gained the ascendency, in turn issued its dogmas, and labored to force the other to receive them as the true foundation of religious faith, practice, and fellowship. So embittered was the strife, that the historian says: "There arose endless animosities, and seditions, treacherous plots, and open acts of injustice and violence between contending parties. Council was assembled against Council; and their jarring and contradictory decrees spread perplexity and confusion through the Christian world."

The Council of Constantinople, being convened by Theodosius, in 381, and to which the second rank among General Councils is attributed, appears to have regarded the Nicene Creed as imperfect, particularly its sentiment respecting the character of Christ and the Holy Spirit. A part of its time was therefore given to recasting or remodeling this Nicene article of faith, and giving it a more definite shape. Hence it is said that this Council "gave the

finishing touch to what the Council of Nice had left incomplete, and fixed in a full and determinate manner the doctrine of *three* persons in one God." It also, says history, "branded with infamy all the errors, and set a mark of execration upon all the heresies that were hitherto known." Of course, the standard by which it determined any religious sentiment to be erroneous and heretical, or otherwise, was the *creed* it had constructed or rather remodeled. All who declined accepting it as the statement of their faith, were "branded with infamy," as errorists and heretics, however pious and devout they might be. The love of a Christian heart, and the purity of an earnest life, were not sufficient to secure to them religious brotherhood. They must subscribe to the creed made by erring and fallible men, or else suffer excommunication. The result of all this was to exclude, as far as human power could, from the household of faith, many of the humble followers of Christ; and, hence, gave a basis of Christian fellowship entirely too restricted to meet the

generous sentiments of the Gospel of peace and good-will.

Respecting the decrees and articles of faith enunciated by the different Councils, of which there were nineteen, as claimed by the Roman Catholic Church, but in reality many more, embracing a period of more than twelve hundred years, the same is true of them that is of the Councils of Nice and Constantinople. They were narrow, proscriptive, arbitrary, dogmatic, bigoted, and often vindictive and tyrannical; and, in the end, totally failed to secure oneness of sentiment and harmony of spirit. The dogma established by one as a fundamental article of faith was, not unfrequently, amended, modified, or abolished by another; hence, its authority was maintained only while a majority could be induced to sustain it, and hold in check the minority. It is a significant fact in the history of creeds, that they have undergone frequent and essential changes, affecting their fundamental principles; therefore, that which was held as stanch orthodoxy by one, was

regarded as arrant heterodoxy by another; and *vice versa*.

In further proof of the futility of any human creed or creeds as a basis of fellowship, I desire to refer very briefly to the efforts that were made during the sixteenth century to form a union between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. The latter denomination was organized by Zuingle and Calvin. These two religious communities included among their membership many truly noble and generous-hearted Christians; and in their opposition to the corruption and tyranny of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, there was common cause between them. For these reasons, and that they might thereby increase their strength, and enlarge the sphere of their influence, it was desirable that they should form one brotherhood. Among those who earnestly labored to secure this truly Christian object, were Luther, Melancthon, Zuingle, and Calvin. To effect this union numerous trials were made. Long consultations were entered into, and many plans

proposed. Articles of faith were drawn up with great care by the different parties, each submitting his as the basis of union. But after many fruitless attempts, it was learned that no unaided or uninspired human wisdom, however sincere its motives and desirable its purposes, could produce a system of religious faith of sufficient simplicity, and yet of ample breadth, upon which all Christians might meet in fraternal fellowship. This failure of these learned and earnest men is another unimpeachable witness that human creeds, however well intended, can never give to the Christian world an adequate basis of religious brotherhood.

Permit me next to refer to the practical working of creeds as they now exist in the middle of the nineteenth century. That they have lost much of their iron rule over the intellect and conscience of men is certainly true; but that they still have a strong grasp upon the hearts, and, in a large degree, control the religious action of many, is equally true. The "World's Con-

vention," as it was denominated, which assembled in London, England, a few years since, is an instance of this. This great gathering of Protestant clergymen, both from Europe and America, could not be satisfied with the word of God as a system of faith and Christian character as the test of fellowship, but must draw up in form a set of theological dogmas, to which all who would enter its courts, and enjoy its pleasures and profits, must subscribe; and, hence, some of the most devout and pious men, who had long desired to witness a drawing together of different religious denominations, were excluded from its deliberations.

But the question is, What are the practical workings of creeds in this age of mental and moral progress? 1st. I remark that the creed of any one religious organization does not give a basis upon which any two denominations may unite, forming but one association, much less one upon which all might stand in harmony. In proof of this, I shall take the liberty to

mention especially the Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal Churches, with their respective creeds. And I select them because of their numbers and influence in the Christian world, and not because I have any particular partiality toward them, or hold any prejudice against them; nor yet because I desire to subject their creeds as platforms of brotherhood, exclusively to criticism, or compare their merits. I have to do just now with facts, and not with Churches.

Suppose it was desirable that these two Churches should unite, constituting but one religious communion; and, to effect this, that a delegation from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, should be deputed to meet the quadrennial Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and to make overtures of union to that body. It is evident that to effect a coalition between these two denominations, there must be some common basis or platform adopted. Without this, all efforts to secure the object proposed

must ultimately prove fruitless. But that some common ground be agreed upon, suppose the delegation from the Presbyterian Church should submit as a basis of union their creed, the Westminster Confession of Faith; and that they should do this is both reasonable and probable. Indeed, my argument rests upon the hypothesis that they would; for I am aiming to test the sufficiency of any human creed as a foundation of brotherhood among the disciples of Christ. I repeat, suppose the Presbyterian delegation should present their Confession of Faith as the ground-work of union, urging its claims because of its superior adaptation to the wants of the Church, and because it more nearly embodies the essential elements of Christian truth—how would this proposition be met by our Methodist brethren? How many would give it a cordial welcome and a hearty support? If the question should come to a vote on the adoption of the proposed terms of union, how many of them would be found in the affirmative?

What number would boldly and firmly say "Ay?" Respecting this we have no positive means of knowing, as it has never been practically tested; but the strongest probabilities are, that nineteen-twentieths, if not ninety-nine-hundredths of the entire quadrennial Conference would record themselves in the negative. That the plan would be rejected, hardly admits of a doubt. What the main reason for declining to accept the proposition might be, is not for me to suppose. That they exist, and that they would be urged, will not, I think, be questioned by any candid person.

Again: suppose, on the other hand, that a delegation be deputed by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church to meet the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and to make to that body overtures of union; and suppose in complying with their duty they should submit the Discipline of the Church they represent as the basis of brotherhood, would not its reception be analogous to that which I have claimed would be given

to the one coming from the other party? Would not the terms be respectfully declined? Most certainly they would, else I have missed my reckoning, which rests upon facts, namely: that the Presbyterian Church prefers its own Confession of Faith and form of ecclesiastical government to the other. Reasons, sufficiently potent, could not be urged by either party to induce the other to abandon its old religious platform and step upon—to it—a new one. Each esteems its own creed as superior to the other, and therefore could not be persuaded to substitute any other in its stead. If, then, this illustration truly represents facts as they are, and as they would be providing the supposed proposal for union between the two denominations mentioned should now be made, it follows that the creed of neither party could give a basis of competent breadth upon which both might meet and form one brotherhood. And if this is true of these, it must be of all other religious constitutions, as platforms of union, produced by the wisdom

of man; and that it is true, can not safely be denied. And if no two denominations can unite upon any one human creed, how incalculably less possible that all Churches, with their various ecclesiastical forms of faith and government, each differing more or less from the other, could meet and form but one religious association upon any human constitution, creed, or confession of faith. I am of the opinion that nothing would be risked in claiming that the concentrated wisdom of the entire clerical world can not construct a platform of Christian brotherhood upon which all the members of God's spiritual family might meet in fraternal union and fellowship, other than the one which I have aimed to set forth in this letter, namely: *Christian character.*

Secondly. I remark respecting the practical workings of creeds that they foster prejudice; hence, in the tendency of their influence, are sectional, and are therefore too narrow in their spirit and teaching to meet the wants of the enlarged and liberal sen-

timent inspired by Christian truth, when permitted to have free course. It is not only true that creeds produce sectarianism, which will not be denied by those acquainted with ecclesiastical history, but it is equally true that they nourish it. This will appear evident if the following considerations are carefully noted: 1st. They—creeds—differ from each other on some very grave religious questions; and also on some matters of Church policy. That this is sustained by facts may be learned by referring to the documents themselves; and, hence, it is not necessary that I should specify these differences. 2d. These respective creeds, with their diverse teachings on faith and Church government, of necessity become the constitution of the particular denominations which have adopted them; and the sentiments and practice they inculcate are transferred to the very heart of those Churches, and become inwrought with their living forces, and exert a very strong influence in rounding the corners and sharpening the angles of faith

and practice which constitute the distinguishing features of these respective religious organizations. And since they differ in several points of decided moment, and since these differences must of necessity be infused into the habits of religious thought, sentiment, and life of the several and distinct Churches, it follows that sectarianism must be the result; or, in other words, denominational individuality and idiosyncrasies, with all their likes and dislikes. And as each Church regards its creed superior in its statement of faith and in its details of government to others, there will be produced and nurtured a sentiment and feeling toward itself and toward others corresponding to these, which will ultimate in prejudice, of greater or less strength, for the one and against the others. It follows, therefore, if my argument is correct, that creeds embody, beget, and perpetuate prejudice, schism, and sectionalism from age to age, and, hence, do not form an adequate basis upon which all Christians may meet in fellowship. The maxim of Cæsar very aptly

illustrates their workings. He says:—"Money will raise soldiers, and soldiers will raise money." So creeds will produce sects and parties, and these in turn will make creeds; and this is their history.

Permit me to add in this connection, that no one expects the whole Christian world to be converted to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, nor to the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, nor to the Episcopal Confession of Faith, nor to the Baptist Confession of Faith, nor to any other purely human confession of faith. Not even the most sanguine denominationalist, though banded to his Church by ties strong as hoops of steel, expects this, for the plain reason that they (creeds) are sectional in their platforms of faith, and in their tendencies.

My *fourth reason* that creeds have failed in furnishing a basis for the common brotherhood of all Christians, *is founded on the religious tendency of the age, and especially upon the developments of religious sentiment and feeling since the autumn of* 1857.

As I have already remarked, creeds have been for more than a quarter of a century losing their grasp upon and control over the intellect and affections of those who have received them as their exponent of faith and practice. This is evident: 1st. Because a more liberal construction of their teachings is permitted now than heretofore. A wider range of interpreting their language is now tolerated. Formerly a very rigid technical belief in their doctrine was demanded, and an exact submission to their peculiar forms and ceremonies exacted. Now, members are received and retained who do not acknowledge all their *articles* of religion; and others still who give to these articles a free construction; so free, indeed, that less than a half century since it would have been pronounced "*heresy.*" 2d. It is clear that they are losing their molding power over men's faith and conscience, and their footing in the affections of many, because public sentiment will not now tolerate the direct teaching of their peculiar tenets in Sabbath schools. The

instruction in these "nurseries of piety"—these auxiliaries to the spread of Christian truth—is directed more to the development of the moral and spiritual sentiment of the young, and less to the imprinting upon their inexperienced and susceptible nature the dogmas of any particular human creed. Hitherto it was widely different. Soundness on all questions of faith, however obscure or incomprehensible, was held as essential to salvation; and all doubts that might be raised respecting them were regarded as precursors of perdition. Hence, different denominations arranged and printed questions and answers which especially embodied their respective theological tenets. These were taught to the young, both in the home circle and in the Sabbath school. But this catechetical process of bolting and screwing the youthful mind to the teachings of any particular confession of faith, has fallen almost entirely into disuse. There are but few localities where the prevailing sentiment is not against it. True, there may be here and there a con-

gregation or an individual whose "orthodox" features are large and well defined, having been cast in the theological mold of the middle of the seventeenth century, who would prefer that the old order of things should be restored. The enlightened, enlarged, and generous spirit of religion which has gone forth, and which has disarmed the demon of partisan zeal, will not permit this. To test this fact, let any Church introduce into the Sabbath-school under its care the "Longer and Shorter Catechisms," and require them to be taught and learned as of yore; how long, think you, it would require to depreciate that school a hundred per cent.? No longer, I apprehend, than for the fact to become generally known. Teach our children in the name of Jesus to love God with the whole heart, and to walk in the ways of virtue; but do not cram their young minds with the dogmas of any human creed, is the edict of the spirit of this age; and it will not suffer it to be infracted with impunity. This process of demoralizing the

force of creeds and of loosening their hold upon the intellect and heart of the people, has been going on for more than a half century; and has resulted in their being rejected by hundreds of thousands, and in their being so liberally interpreted by thousands more, who still receive them, as to eliminate nearly all their technical theology. These facts indicate the religious tendency of the age, which in turn clearly proves that no creed furnishes a platform of brotherhood of sufficient liberality; for if it were so, then would it form a common plane upon which the fraternal spirit, now wide-spread and still increasing in breadth and depth and length in the land, would draw together the multitude of Christ's disciples. But this will not nor can not be claimed for any creed. Facts, some of which I have alluded to, prove the reverse of any such claim to be true.

The development of religious sentiment and practice since the autumn of 1857, is a most unimpeachable witness in proof of the point now in argument. One of the

marked features in the Christian history of this country for the past three years, is the great and glorious work of reformation, which poured through the length and breadth of this goodly land like the light of day from the unbarred chambers of the morning. It made its way into cities, towns, villages, and rural districts, arresting the farmer at his plow, the mechanic at his bench, the merchant at his ledger, the banker at his counter, and the lawyer in his office, calling them to strive for a higher life. It thrilled through the heart as the voice of the Infinite One, entreating the wanderer back from the wilderness of sin and death. It did not go crashing through communities like a wild, exciting storm; but moved on, like the course of nature, grand and triumphant, making itself heard and felt, subverting the foundations of sectarian prejudice, sweeping away barriers that had stood like grim prison walls between the children of the Most High, and calling them to work together in the precious harvest-field of life. The union of

feeling and effort which it produced was one of the characteristics of this revival, and was that which pre-eminently commended it to all who had drank freely of the spirit of love. Wherever its influence was extended, "Union Prayer-Meetings" were organized, which met weekly, and in many places daily. To these all Christians were invited, and in them nearly all denominations were represented. In the main, sectarianism was put under ban in these religious gatherings; and if it did worm its way in, it came as a foreign element masked in the robe of charity, thus concealing its features so chilling and repellent to the spirit that prevailed there. As indicating the controlling sentiment, I will give a few brief extracts from reports of some of these Union Prayer-Meetings. In Bedford street Methodist Episcopal Church, New York city, on the 8th of March, 1858, Mr. S. D. Van Beuren, who conducted the services, and who is an Episcopalian, said, in the presence of a large audience: "I know no sect or party in these efforts." Another

gentleman said: "It was a happy thought that once-contending sects were now observed sitting at the Master's feet on terms of general humility, and with feelings of millennial harmony." Another said: "I desire to be plainly understood as ignoring sectarianism in this great work now going on, and with David I rejoice in being the companion of all them that fear God." Another gentleman told the story of Whitefield, who, while preaching at Philadelphia, said: "There would be no Methodists, nor Presbyterians, nor Baptists, none of the sects preserved in heaven—there, all would be Christians." Such sentiments as these were not confined to any one locality or assembly, but were common wherever these meetings were organized. I have heard, in Union Prayer-Meetings, in Sabbath-School Conventions, in Young Men's Christian Associations, held in different parts of the West, remarks like these: "We come here, not as Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, or Congregationalists, bringing with us our peculiar denomi-

national creeds; but we come simply as Christians, claiming the Bible as our rule of faith, and character as the ground of fellowship." Mr. S. J. Prime, in his work on the Power of Prayer, says: "The Union Prayer-Meeting is now a *type*. It represents what has never been so well represented before in modern days: that among all Christians there are elements of coalescence and harmony; that there is a union deeper down, and which underlies all external unions. * * * Thus proving that it *is* really what it professes to be, 'a union meeting.' Thousands go without ever raising the question, whom they are to meet or to what Church organization do they belong. Neither do they care." Many more extracts might be given, but these must be sufficient to show the development of sentiment and action in this remarkable work. All sectarian names were laid aside, and all creeds and confessions of faith, as bonds of union and communion, were left behind, and men united in the solemn worship of God, and in carrying

forward the work of salvation, upon the word of inspiration as the platform of faith, and upon character as the bond of fellowship.

On these facts, which will not be denied, such questions as these may be raised: Why was not some one of the self-named "orthodox" creeds submitted as the basis of union and co-operation? Why thrust them all into the background? Why this profound silence respecting their claims? The answer is obvious. No one of them furnishes a foundation broad enough for all Christians to meet upon, and worship, and work together. Is it not both reasonable and probable, had there been such, that its excellences, its sufficiency, would have been urged by its supporters, and acknowledged by all earnest and sincere men? Most certainly. That no such claim was submitted is tacit admission that no such uninspired creed existed. Even the most ardent admirers of these human productions, as conditions of fellowship, saw them set aside and did not utter a word of pro-

test, or if they did, it was feeble and inefficient. Nothing has occurred in modern times that furnishes evidence so conclusive that creeds are essentially sectarian in their very spirit and tendency as the religious movement of the past three years. The testimony comes not alone from those who have entirely renounced them, but from those who have not; at least in theory. The evidence of such, given by word and deed, is the more weighty. Now take the facts I have indicated, all of which, with many of their details, every close observer of the late religious work in our country is in possession, and they prove with unquestionable certainty that creeds and confessions of faith are fragmentary in their teaching and sectional in their influence; and, hence, do not furnish a platform upon which all God's children can harmoniously meet. And they demonstrate, with no less clearness and force, that the Bible alone as the rule of faith, and Christian character as the test of fellowship, furnish the only basis of ample

length and breadth upon which all the disciples of Christ may meet in true fraternal union.

Fraternally yours.

Letter IV.

My Dear Sir and Brother:

In my last address to you the question discussed was, *Christian character is the only true test of Christian fellowship.* This I aimed to demonstrate by showing: 1st. That it is sufficiently specific. 2d. That its breadth is entirely adequate. 3d. That it is sufficiently restricting. 4th. That all other tests that have been submitted as foundations of brotherhood have failed to secure this end. The proposition itself, which these points with their facts and arguments were introduced to sustain, few will venture to deny. That a man is to be esteemed for what he really is, is a principle so plain and just, that it amounts almost if not altogether to a truism. With all sincere, unprejudiced men Christian character is a sufficient passport to their fellowship. It is to them the signet of

Divine approval. To deny this would be to subject one's self to the charge of bigotry and an unreasonable zeal in favor of party or sect.

At this point in the discussion, the question may be raised, *What is Christian character?* or, in other words, What does this phrase imply? That this is a fair and lawful inquiry I most cheerfully grant; and that it should be answered is both reasonable and just. It is reasonable, because he who adopts a principle as a rule of action should be able to elucidate it, and willing to answer all relevant questions which may arise from it. It is just, because fair dealing with himself and with others demands it, since his course of action is to be determined by this rule.

Before proceeding to meet the question raised, I desire to premise the following: 1st. That Christian character may certainly be known; and more, it must be known, else the rule can not be rendered practical. I could not apply a principle in determining whether or not another filled its re-

quirements if I had no clear idea of it, or of what it demanded. If I make a certain character the condition of a certain relation, then, before that relation can be acknowledged, I must decide whether that character which meets the condition has been secured; and, before I can determine this last point, I must have pretty clear ideas of the elements that form the state of mind specified. Hence the necessity of not only possibly understanding what constitutes Christian character, but positively to know it, both respecting myself and others. Touching myself, I know it by a consciousness of the harmony of my feelings, thoughts, purposes, and actions with the will of the Divine Being; and from an inward realization of peace springing up within the soul. As to others, I know it from their confession and deportment, which are the outward expressions of the state of the heart. If these are right and pure, they show a mind at peace with the government of God. So others determine respecting myself; and by the same rule the

world perceives who are the disciples of Christ. It was said by him who spoke from heaven: "A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them." Again, he said: "By this shall all (men) know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Not more certainly may the character of a tree be known by the quantity and quality of the fruit it bears, than the character of the man may be determined by the deeds he produces. As we may know the one by the fruit, so may we the other. It is the outward manifestation by which the quality of the tree or the character of the man is made conscious to others. One has truly said: "The works of the life are the tongue of the heart." But, 2d. The Bible is the infallible standard by which to measure one's manhood in Christianity. This position does not conflict, as might be supposed at first sight, with the sentiment that each one knows his relation to God from a consciousness

that his feelings, thoughts, purposes, and actions are in harmony with the Divine will; for by the word of inspiration he determines this. He knows there is no controversy between the Bible and his state of mind and current of thought, by comparing them with it. Its teachings inspire the one and commend the other. Its specifications of the purity of the inward spiritual life are so plain that mistakes can not easily occur. It furnishes the test by which I am to try myself and by which I may estimate my brother. As it is the rule of faith, so is it the measure of character.

Having submitted these antecedent propositions, let us take up and examine the question, What is Christian character? And, as this is the basis of fraternal fellowship, it is well that we gain as clear a comprehension of its elements and developments as is possible; and that this may be secured, I propose looking at it first from a negative stand-point—that is, specifying a few things that it is not. I am not, per-

mit me to say, much in favor of negative argument, yet no inconsiderable light may be shed upon a question by presenting, in contrast, both the affirmative and the negative.

1st. I remark that *Christian character* is not simply the belief in any creed whatever. It may be ever so "orthodox;" and its date may run back over the lapse of centuries; and it may be sanctioned by the voice of Councils, Conferences, and Assemblies, and sustained by their influence; yet belief alone in its doctrines will not entitle any one to the claim of a union with the Messiah, and, therefore, to the state of the heart which is the condition of brotherhood. One may be, after the most accurate measurement by the wisest creed, pronounced "sound in the faith," but if he wants those graces of the spirit which the Scriptures mention with so much clearness, and which render the life a light to the world, he does not possess the requisite test of fellowship; nor will men award it to him. Rev. H. W. Beecher, in a recent sermon,

while discussing a subject which involved this very point, said: "When men say that doctrine is indispensable to piety, I say it is false, or else you condemn five-sixths of all Christians; for I aver that there is not even one in ten who could conform to any system of doctrine. If the masses of Christians do say they believe; if, when certain doctrines are presented to them as indispensable to their piety, they do exclaim, 'Credo! Credo!' yet there is not more than one in ten that can appreciate logical reasoning; there is not one in a hundred that can take principles and couple them together so as to construct a symmetrical, logical doctrine. The day is coming when a man—though he be as orthodox as John Knox, of Scotland—if he does not live a good life, will not be regarded by the world as a sound Christian; and when a man—though he be wild on every point of doctrine—if he does live a good life, and loves his God and his fellow-men, and has faith in Christ, and is in communion with him, will be acknowledged by the world to

be a sound Christian." This is presenting the question in a pretty strong light; but not more so than is justifiable. Of course, Mr. Beecher means by "doctrine," such as is set forth in the various human creeds, and not the plain truths and facts submitted in the word of God as propositions of faith. That he has not overstated the point is evident from this, that there are many whom the world acknowledge to be Christians, ay, more, whom the "orthodox" themselves—except perhaps those of the strictest sect—admit as such, who do not believe many of the points of doctrine embodied in creeds, and who emphatically deny their authority. If this is so, it follows that faith in them, or in their teachings, is not essential to Christian character, nor will it lay the foundation and build it up. This will appear more clearly if it is remembered: (1.) That they (creeds) differ in their statement of what some are pleased to call, "articles of religion," or "faith." (2.) That many of those who interpret them not unfrequently differ widely

and essentially in their construction of these articles. This is true when the Trinity, Depravity, and Special Election are the themes of investigation. The correctness of these statements is known to all who are ordinarily familiar with the doctrines of creeds, and the various expositions of the interpreters of these doctrines.

2d. I observe that *Christian character* is not merely membership in Church, although that Church may claim a regular descent from the apostolic age, in support of which an unbroken succession of priests or bishops may be brought forward. It may even be admitted that this claim and its vindication are founded upon the truth; still membership in it will not of itself constitute any one a Christian. A man may be in union with this Church surrounded by the prestige of antiquity, and sustained by the clearest testimony in its pretensions to evangelical origin and integrity, and yet be wanting in nearly all the living forces that form the foundation of real spiritual life; and that build up and maintain a vital,

overflowing, and truthful religious character. In support of this, I need only refer to the Apostolic Church, the evangelical basis of which none will deny. It numbered among its members those who were quite destitute of every claim to Christian character. This is evident from such language as the following: "For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men." If membership in the Church, during the personal administration of its inspired founders, and before creeds had usurped the authority of Divine law, did not of itself confer those qualities of heart that make up real spiritual life, it would be presumption to claim more for a union with any Church now, since the dogmas of sects and parties have greatly obscured the simplicity of Christian truth.

I would not be understood, from the point here assumed, as undervaluing Church organization and membership. These are agencies to be employed in the complete

development and maturity of a broad, generous religious character, and without which the labor of this first, last, and noblest work of life would be greatly increased, and the chances of ultimate success correspondingly diminished. All this I cordially believe. The position is not, therefore, introduced because I hold religious association as being of slight moment, but because many rely mainly upon it for their claims to Christian character, having but little else to commend them. Such look upon those who do not sustain the same relation as themselves somewhat as the Pharisee did upon the publican. They walk through the world, fastidiously holding up their religious robes, lest they should become defiled by coming in contact with those of slightly different texture, color, and pattern.

3d. I further remark, that Christian character *is not regularity in attending any place of worship.* He who rests upon this builds upon an insecure foundation. Each Lord's day may find him in his accustomed place at the house of prayer, and

his lips may unite with others in the solemn services of that house; but if this is all, his claim to genuine life in Christ must be very inconsiderable indeed. Too many, it is to be feared, trust chiefly in the regularity of their attending public worship, in which they join with a degree of gravity amounting almost to austerity, thinking that this will make up all deficiencies and balance the moral and spiritual account for the past week. Such hold religion as a kind of an absorbent, which is to be applied each Sabbath in removing the sins of the conscience, which may have accumulated during the preceding six days; a kind of process by which all moral debts may be liquidated and a receipt in full obtained. I repeat, that if this is all, any pretensions to that state of mind which revealed truth holds as essential to Christian character, and which the world acknowledges as such, are certainly not well founded. You are not to infer, permit me to observe, from this position, that regular attendance at some place of worship is of little value;

that it is to be regarded with indifference. The practice of the early Church, or Christians, while under the immediate guidance of the apostles, expressed in these words: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some *is;* but exhorting *one* another," is sufficient to prove that frequent meetings for religious instruction and encouragement were held by them, from which their necessity in carrying forward the work of Divine truth in the heart may be inferred, as well as the importance of regularly attending them. All who have any valuable experience in Christian life know the profit derived from often resorting to the house of prayer. It is one of the means to be employed in developing and building up a heavenly character, which God and all good men will approve: but that it is that character is without foundation in fact.

4th. Again: Christian character *is not conformity to the outward forms of religion.* That these have their uses and significations, is very true. To the Jew every arti-

cle of furniture belonging to the tabernacle or temple had its use; and every rite or ceremony, whether it was keeping a fast or a feast, or offering a sacrifice, was full of significancy. Some of these rites were for the development of God's moral government; others were instituted to perpetuate the remembrance of his interposition in their behalf; and some may have included both these objects. They were mediums through which the infinite One shadowed forth his character and plans. The Jew who kept them with sincere motives, that is, in a right state of mind, heard the voice of God in them, and was thus drawn toward him. To the Christian, the rites of religion under the New Testament are expressive. True, when compared to those of the Old Covenant, the number has been largely reduced, and their observance greatly simplified. They are, however, by no means, less significant. One of them (the Lord's Supper) is designed to express to the senses, and through them to the soul, the perfection of God's character. In this we see

his infinite love; we hear the utterance of his abhorrence of sin, and learn his earnest desire and willingness to save us. More still: in this we witness the precious love of Christ in laying down his life for us. Further: in keeping this Christian rite with a just condition of mind, we express our faith in the perfection of God's nature and moral government; in the sacrifice Jesus made for sin and its completeness; and in the promise that Christ will come again and gather his disciples home. And as this Christian duty is significant, so it may be claimed for all that have been commanded by the Head of the Church. They are not only expressive of the character of our heavenly Father, and of the incomparable love of Christ, and our faith in and appreciation of all that he has done for us in the plan of salvation, but are also channels through which, when rightly employed, spiritual blessings flow to the heart; for in them the Christian man hears the voice of God calling him to the bosom of eternal love. By these, the Divine arm is

leading him to a higher and richer plane of religious experience. Notwithstanding all this, these ordinances and forms may be observed, and yet some, if not many, of the elements of Christian character be wanting. This I shall aim to make more apparent hereafter.

5th. In the further development of the question, I observe that it is not obedience to the moral duties of life that meets the condition of Christian fellowship. Not that these are unessential to it, or are not included in it; but they, of themselves, do not constitute it—do not complete it. One may be honest, truthful, just, benevolent, industrious, prudent; in short, he may possess high moral sentiment, and practice all the moral maxims, and by these gain the reputation of being a model moral man, and yet not possess a Christian character. He may want piety; and wanting this, he is destitute of the principle that lies at the very foundation of the highest type of spiritual manhood. We respect and esteem him who uniformly practices all the moral

virtues, and hold him a valuable member of society. But it would be unjust to him and to truth to claim more for him than this. We may cheerfully grant that he is a model moral man, but we dare not say that he is a model Christian man. Morality does not include Christianity; but Christianity does, of necessity, embrace morality in all the length and breadth of its signification. It is with character as with the results of chemical combination. As the omission of a single element in the latter may essentially affect the nature of the substance—as the absence of oxygen in the atmosphere—so the want of a single principle in the former may essentially change its nature, and hence materially affect its ultimate results.

I have been thus particular in presenting the negative view of the question that its positive might be the more clearly seen. And I may add here, that it (Christian character) has its specific elements and developments, which are susceptible of clear definition and illustration; hence, is not

anything and everything men may choose to make it. True, different persons may not use the same terms in defining and illustrating its principles and manifestations; but they will be found, upon close examination, to be substantially the same, if the Divine law has been permitted to guide; for in this law we may not only find its elements laid down, but its developments mapped out.

I shall now proceed to meet the question affirmatively, What is Christian character? This inquiry involves two points: I. What are its elements? II. What are its developments? The former of these, as it constitutes the basis of the latter, demands attention first; and I shall present it in this form:

I. WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER?

1st. I remark *first*, that *faith in an infinite, all-wise, and beneficent Being is one of its essential constituents.* This lies at the very foundation; and without it no one can

take the first step toward the formation of this specific character. It is therefore written: "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him;* for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."—Heb. xi: 6. This text proves with all the clearness of positive testimony, (1.) That faith in our Creator is necessary to draw us toward him; "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is." (2.) It also proves that this faith must embrace the purity and rectitude of his nature and moral government; hence, he must believe that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The first of these points effectually excludes *atheism;* and the second as thoroughly sets aside *pantheism.* The one admits that God is; and the other that he possesses ability and willingness to reward those who confide in him. If one should deny the existence of the omnipotent Being, thus assuming atheism, or if he should step upon pantheistic ground, by calling in ques-

tion his personal existence separate from and independent of the material universe, thus denying his power to reward uprightness of life, he could not justly lay claim to the fellowship of Christians. Nor would they be chargeable with sectarianism in consequence of their declining to give him the hand of religious brotherhood; for he has denied an essential principle that enters into the formation of that character which is made the basis of Christian fellowship. On this there can be no difference of opinion among the disciples of Christ. All such hold the sentiment that faith in the Divine existence is indispensable to a Christian life. This point the Spirit has determined in the most unequivocal language: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." Plainer terms can not be employed in affirming any proposition; and it can be controverted only by denying the authority of the witness. Moreover, it would be uttering a truism to say that a man will not come to a Being whose existence he denies, or that he will

not seek that which he holds is incapable of conferring any reward. This is self-evident. Therefore, faith in God and in the rectitude and beneficence of his nature and government, is an essential element in the formation of Christian character.

It is not a question that enters into this argument how this faith is secured; that is, whether it is the result of hearing testimony and accepting it as truth, or whether it is the immediate gift of God, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. On this there may be a difference of opinion entertained, and yet not affect materially the real spiritual union of the soul with the "Father of light." But, on the naked proposition that faith in God, which goes down deep into the moral and intellectual consciousness and controls the purposes and actions of life, is essential to a true religious character, there is entire harmony of sentiment among all Christians. It can not, therefore, be sectional, and he who requires it as a condition of Christian fellowship, can not be charged with sectarianism.

2d. A *second* element essential to Christian character *is* faith in Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of the world. He said: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Again, he teaches, "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." It is also recorded: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." It is evident from these witnesses, as well as from others that might be brought forward, and which you will readily call to mind: (1.) That as faith in God is required, so is faith in Christ: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." (2.) That without faith in the Messiah, sins can not be pardoned: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (3.) That the works which he did were to convince the world of the divinity of his mission, that by faith in him as the anointed Son of God, it might have life. There

are many instances recorded in the New Testament, as well as specific statements, that clearly sustain the point that faith in Christ is an indispensable constituent of Christian character. The facts developed in the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion to Christianity, are directly in proof. He inquired: "See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" To this Philip replied: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The answer of this candid and earnest man is remarkable for its brevity and simplicity, and also for its breadth and depth of significance. He said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This was direct to the point, and sufficient. It will also be remarked that the question of Philip, and the reply of the eunuch, are both entirely free from the theological technicalities with which creeds have encumbered the same sentiment. Notwithstanding this loading down a plain Scriptural truth by dogmatic phrases, there is an entire agreement among Christians of all denominations on this car-

dinal element of true manhood in Christ, when it is divested of the robe designed and manufactured by human wisdom and authority, and is clothed in the vesture of Heaven's own workmanship. Should the question, Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God? be propounded to every member of the household of faith, the answer would be, *Yes*. And this question and answer include all the facts recorded by his four biographers connected with his taking on himself the seed of Abraham, his teaching, his miracles, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and his administration of the kingdom of favor; hence, he who believes him to be the "only begotten Son of God," embraces all these in that faith. It follows, therefore, that he who may admit such a person as Christ to have lived among men, but at the same time claims that he was simply a man, rather superior to most of his cotemporaries, yet fallible, and not only liable to err, but did commit many errors, could not be received among those

who believe in him as clearly set forth in the Scriptures. He said of himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Again he says: "Then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." Now, if Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; if he is the medium of approach to the Father; if he speaks the words of God—all of which he, with great plainness, claims for himself—then, certainly, he who refuses accepting him as such denies his Divine mission, and therefore rejects the conditions of spiritual life. And he who fails in this can not justly demand as his right the fellowship of Christians as one of them; nor can he, with any show of truth, charge them with sectarianism, because they decline extending to him the hand of religious brotherhood. If the Bible is true—and my argument rests upon the admission of its verity—he can

no more lay claim to Christian character than he who denies the elements of moral philosophy can to moral character, or he who ignores the principles of justice can to uprightness of life.

On this there can be no difference of sentiment among those who acknowledge the infallible authority of the Scriptures, however various may be their creeds; and there is equal harmony of opinion entertained by all such on the proposition, that faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is an essential element of Christian character. This being the sentiment of all believers, it can not be sectional; and, therefore, he who holds it as an indispensable constituent in the formation of that character which is the condition of fellowship is entirely free from the allegation of sectarianism, and must remain so as long as he adheres faithfully to this principle which is received in common by all Christians.

3d. A *third* element essential to Christian character is, *the heart must receive and nourish supreme love toward the infinite Father.*

It is written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Love toward God may be regarded as the consequence of belief in him, if that faith takes in the perfection of his character, and also takes hold upon our intellect and affections. It is possible for one to believe in the existence of an all-wise Being and yet entertain no love for him. Indeed, in Christian lands there are but few who will deny that God is. The force of religious truth has so entirely permeated the sentiment of all civilized society, that belief in the existence of an omnipotent Being seems to be a matter of course. Many accept it without close, earnest thought or very mature reflection. They have not given the subject any special attention; nor could they assign very succinct reasons for this conviction, should they be interrogated. This is not claiming that they could not render any reason at all why they believed in the existence of an infinite Being, for undoubtedly all men

who admit this idea can assign some cause as a consideration for their entertaining it. It is nevertheless certain that a very large proportion of those who readily consent to this primary truth can give no distinct history of the channels through which they came in possession of it. It must not, however, be inferred from this that the evidences presenting this idea to the understanding lie in realms so remote that but few have power to summon them forth: nor is it to be concluded that they are so intricate and abstruse that only the stronger intellects can free them of their complication and comprehend their testimony. True, many of the witnesses suggesting and sustaining this fundamental sentiment lie far from the ordinary current of thought, and long mental journeys must be performed to obtain them. Others lie deep below the surface, and require months and years of patient labor to dig them up, arrange them, and take down their testimony. But others still are all around us. They are within reach of the millions. They

meet us at every step. They are within us and without us. Their voices may be heard in the book of God, in nature, and in the undying wants of the soul. In view of all this the question may be asked, Why, then, can not all give a reason for their admission of the existence of the Divine Being? The answer appears plain. It is because they do not pause long and think soberly and patiently on the evidences ever before them. They acquiesce in this great truth without any distinct conviction of either head or heart. This is the main reason why so many may be registered among those who believe that God is, and yet can not be recorded among those who love him with the whole heart. It is beyond serious question, in my judgment, that if the people, in all lands of civil and religious liberty, would hearken thoughtfully and earnestly to the evidences the omnipotent One has furnished and placed within their reach of his existence, the purity of his character, and the depth and impartiality of his love, their faith in him would be so strong

and controlling that, in return, they would give him their supreme affections. On this principle may we understand the philosophy of this text: "We love him because he first loved us." It is faith in him that leads to the apprehension of his nature, which ultimates in ardent love toward him; and it is the candid, thoughtful, and cordial reception of the testimony he has given of himself that results in this kind of faith: hence, it may be said, that love toward God is the consequence of belief in him—the kind of faith that has just been described. There is between it and simply a consent of the mind that God is, a very wide difference. The one leads to grateful, earnest love and cheerful obedience; the other has but little control, if any, over the heart or life. And yet it would not do to deny to those who give a nominal assent to this cardinal truth a belief in an all-wise First Cause. Such an allegation they would peremptorily deny. Hence the necessity of this *third* element in the formation of Christian character—a supreme love for

the beneficent Creator. This is the highest attainment of the soul. It is the outward reaching of all its living powers after the Infinite. It permits nothing to intervene between itself and Him upon whom it is fixed. These words of Jesus are the standard of its love: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Without this whole-hearted affection, all faith, though it "could remove mountains," is of little value, and all religious profession and forms are but as "sounding brass or tinkling cymbals." "It suffereth long, is kind, rejoiceth in the truth, and never faileth." It lies in the foundation of all true greatness of soul, and is, therefore, an element in real spiritual life. This will be questioned by no Christian man; and, hence, he who requires it as an essential part of the character of him whom he would fellowship, can not righteously be charged with sectarianism.

4th. A fourth element indispensable in

forming a Christian character is, *Christ must be accepted as the Savior*. It is not sufficient, if we are to hold the Scriptures as true, to admit that Jesus is the Son of God, but he must be received as the gift of the Father to redeem the world. Each must accept him as his personal Savior. Christ said, "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." This is true, because "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved;" and, hence, he who rejects him as such, or even neglects to hear diligently his teachings and to follow his example, refuses the only way of salvation of which we have any knowledge under the reign of Christian truth. On this the testimony of revelation is special and direct. It speaks thus: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And Jesus himself says, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me can not be my disciple." Again, it is written

of the Son: "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." No principle can be more clearly sustained than that, to secure to ourselves such a character as God and all good men will approve, we must receive Christ as the great religious Teacher and only Savior. If we deny him, we bear false witness against the truth; and of us it may justly be said, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" Indeed, it is not necessary that men should deny in words that he is the Anointed of God, to cut off communion with the Fountain of light; for he himself says, "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

But this question may be raised, In what manner, or in what state of mind, is Christ to be received? I reply, that he is to be accepted with humble penitence toward God, against whom sins have been com-

mitted, and by a frank, unfeigned confession of Christ, through whose name alone pardon is given. In confirmation of this, I need only refer you to such texts as the following: "The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Again, Jesus says: "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." These quotations, with marked accuracy, point out the state of mind and manner in which Christ is to be received: and to all such "is he made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." There can be no mistaking the true condition of spirit in which men should submit to the reign of the Messiah, if the word of God is permitted to speak,

and if its directions are followed. Should any one, however, decline accepting Christ as his Savior by humble penitence and confession, he can not lay claim to Christian character, for he fails in one of its essential parts. In this all religious denominations will concur. How much soever they may differ on many other questions, on this they are a unit. Should I, or you, or any one, lay down as a condition of union with God, *repentance toward him, and faith in, and confession of, the Lord Jesus Christ*, it would be only what all religious associations sanction. This position can not, therefore, be sectional, unless the Bible is a sectarian document. It follows that on it, as a single element in the formation of a Christian character, no Church or individual member can fairly be held as sectarian.

I have been thus particular in presenting what I regard as the essential constituents of what may be called the basis of that character which all admit is the only true condition of fellowship. It has been my aim to introduce such elements as the

words of inspiration clearly set forth, and such as are regarded by all disciples of Christ as indispensable. How far I have succeeded in this, let truth determine. Of one thing I am well assured: that not one of them will be denied. And here I am willing to rest this part of the subject, desiring to add, should any one profess faith in and love toward God, and faith in and an acceptance of Christ as his Savior by humble confession, that I would give to him as a Christian the hand of fellowship. This meets the following question: Since Christian character is the condition of religious brotherhood, how can any one be received into fraternal relation who has not previously secured this distinctive quality? In passing, suffer me to remark, that to this legitimate and—to some—rather difficult inquiry, I propose replying more at length in the close of this letter.

II. The *second* point involved in the subject is, What are the fruits or the developments of Christian character? These are to be determined not by mere conjecture, but

by definite rule. You can not more easily nor certainly ascertain a man's moral character than you can his religious. Respecting the former there are certain specific as well as general obligations which, if uniformly complied with, constitute what we call moral character. And so it is respecting the latter. As the one has its standard of measurement accurately graduated, so has the other. The moral law of life is the test in the one case, and the law of the kingdom of Christ is in the other. The latter includes the former of necessity; but the former may not include the latter; hence, a man may obey the one and thereby build up a well-deserved moral reputation, and yet not submit to the other, and therefore not sustain the qualities the law specifies. For instance, he may "do unto others as he would they should do unto him," or he may "deal justly and love mercy," but fail to walk humbly with God. In this case, he meets the obligations he is under to his fellow-men; but neglects the *first* and *higher* duties he owes to his Creator and Benefac-

tor. I say *first* and *higher* duties, for he who loves God with his whole heart will love his neighbor as himself; and in both these relations the sentiments that pervade the soul will obtain expression; that is, there will be an outward manifestation of his love for the Supreme Being, and his love for man. The evidence thus given, taken with his confession of faith in the Divine goodness, is the index to the state of the heart; and if this condition of the heart harmonizes with the properties set forth in the Scriptures, he is entitled to be recognized as possessing the requisite character. But I desire to speak more definitely of the developments of real manhood in Christ.

1st. *First, there will be a cheerful conformity of life to the duties arising from a reception of the principles I have submitted as composing the elements of Christian character.* For example: Belief in and love toward God form the basis of reverence and devotion; for faith in him, which rests upon the testimony he has given of himself, includes

an apprehension, of more or less distinctness, of the purity, rectitude, and benevolence of his character; and in proportion as faith in him is clear and liberal, so will be the conceptions of the infinite excellence of his nature; and as these are distinct in the mental and moral consciousness, so will reverence and devotion be marked, earnest, and chaste. If the soul cherishes no living faith in the Divine Being; if it has no love toward him, then will reverence and solemn worship be wanting. We do not expect them to flow from such a state of mind no more than we look for a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit. And as inexcusable ignorance, or willful perversity in sin, shuts out from the heart the true character of God, so will all feelings of reverence and devotion subside; and the life, instead of being conformed to the laws of righteousness, will be widely at variance with them. But of him who professes faith in and love for our Father in heaven, we expect humble veneration and earnest worship, as much as we look for an uncor-

rupt fountain to send forth pure water. He has no right to withhold these manifestations of confidence and affection from us, nor from the world, if he could. True, we do not claim an ostentatious display of sanctity—an overwrought effort in devotion; but certainly we have every good reason to look for an unfeigned expression of these elements of Christian character. One anciently said: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." This assuredly is a fair proposition, and can not be ingenuously declined. Should one use the name of the Creator profanely, or even irreverently, it is conclusive evidence that he entertains no living faith in nor reverence for him. There is no harmony between God's law, which says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," and this action; and there could be no hesitancy in deciding the case. Again: should any habitually neglect to pay homage to God, or should he fulfill this duty only when the circumstance was so extraordinary that it

would be much more easily kept than omitted, it would be proof that he possessed but little, if any, real love toward him. His life in this would not be in conformity to the law which says: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

As further illustrating the point, that he who is in possession of the elements of Christian character will comply with the duties arising from them, I refer you to the following, namely: Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the reception of him as the Savior by penitence and confession. When one acknowledges faith in the Messiah, and professes to have accepted him as his Redeemer, and also to have obtained pardon of sins from the Father through him, we expect of such a life corresponding to this new and holy relation into which he is now brought. He claims to love Christ as the sent of God—the great Teacher and Savior. If this profession of his is true, we shall see unmistakable evidence of it. The spirit within will bear

its fruits without. The latter is the expression of the former. Christ says, "If a man love me he will keep my words." He then adds: "And he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." Conformity of life to the inspired law is the clearest evidence of the state of the heart toward God and his Son Jesus Christ. He who keeps it not is declared, by the testimony of the Messiah, to have no union by love with him; but to him who walks in it there is every assurance of the Divine approval. To this the following texts furnish ample proof: "Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." In this testimony these points are affirmed with great distinctness: (1.) That walking in harmony with the law of Christ, induced

by right motives, is indubitable evidence to himself and to others that he is in him and united to him. (2.) That to profess to know him by enjoying his love, while his teachings are disregarded, is unmixed proof that he is destitute of spiritual life; that is, his profession is a deception, a falsehood. (3.) That he who claims to abide in Christ should manifest the spirit and mind that he did. In perfect agreement with this sentiment is this text: "Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The opposite of this must be true, namely: If any man have the spirit of Christ, he is his. And it is equally certain that he who possesses the spirit of Jesus will bear its fruits, or, in other words, will walk as he walked. The life will be a copy of the love, meekness, gentleness, truthfulness, and benevolence of the Messiah's.

2d. This leads me to notice, in the *second* place, some of the principal traits of character he is expected to manifest who claims to be a disciple of Christ.

(1.) *He must be truthful.* Not only is he

required to acknowledge the truth as it is in Jesus, but it should dwell in his heart. His love for it should be so strong that no consideration could induce him to swerve from it. He should frankly confess it before men, how much soever this might subject him to their sneers, persecutions, and slights. His integrity should be constant and unwavering, making his life a commentary upon truth's majesty and excellency. He should live it to the very brim, both by word and by deed, compromising it neither for selfish ends nor for party purposes. With all these he must heartily comply, if he would shape his life after Christ's. Should he fail to confess the truth and to maintain it, in the various relations he holds in religion, society, and commerce, he falls short of following him who is the Truth, and on whose lips deceit and falsehood were never found; and failing in this, he is deficient in one of the essential developments of Christian character.

(2.) *Meekness* is another fruit of the

Spirit, which he who is a disciple of the Messiah must bear. This was a marked trait of character in Christ. He said: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." It shone forth in his reply to the Pharisees, when they found fault with his eating with publicans and sinners; and also in his compassion toward the multitude, "because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." How beautifully it is expressed in his forbearance under injuries and provocations, and his last words on the cross: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." As Christ bore this fruit, so will those who possess his spirit. Indeed, there is no duty in Christian life more frequently and pointedly enjoined than it. From the numerous quotations that might be introduced, I shall select the following: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, * * * humbleness of mind, meek-

ness, long-suffering." "Put them in mind * * * to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing meekness to all men." "Who is a wise man, * * * let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." How clearly is this trait of character commended. It forms one of the essential characteristics of life in Christ Jesus. Without it many other virtues may be marred, and their strength greatly weakened. It is one of the sweetest and most beautiful graces of Christianity, and one which wins the dearest affections of the soul. I regard it, and, therefore, put it down as one of the developments of Christian character, holding that he who is destitute of it is deficient in one of the essential features of true spiritual life.

(3.) *Kindness* is another of the outward growths of genuine discipleship. This is that trait of character which delights in laboring for the happiness of others, and which aims to meet cheerfully their reasonable wishes by alleviating, as far as possible, their distresses, assuaging their griefs, en-

couraging them to meet life's duties and trials with brave hearts, and which vigilantly guards against giving them pain. As a fruit of a regenerated soul, it may be numbered among the most precious, and also may be regarded as one of the manifestations of a right spirit within. As an essentiality to Christian character, the Scriptures are full and clear in setting it forth. It is most impressively taught in the parable of the good Samaritan. As he bends over his wounded and prostrate fellow-man, irrespective of nationality and regardless of personal danger, relieving his distress, how like the light of heaven this quality of the soul shines around him. Through the entire narrative he stands the very embodiment of compassion. But not only is this virtue enforced by parable, but also by special command. Hence it is written, "Be *ye* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted." Add to "godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." Thus plainly speaks

the word of inspiration on this development of spiritual life in Christ. I hold it as one of the unmistakable proofs of union with our glorious Teacher and Redeemer. In its absence, I should regard the character as seriously wanting, being destitute of one of its indispensable fruits; and should, therefore, be unwilling to recognize such as a Christian brother.

(4.) *Faithfulness* is another witness bearing strong testimony to the purity and uprightness of the heart. What I mean by this term is a strict adherence to the duties of life in all its righteous relations, domestic, social, moral, professional, commercial, and religious. Faithfulness in the more immediate forms of religion, such as belong to public worship, is not enough. Its range is much greater than this. It is, as a manifestation of Christian character, a complete circle, including fidelity to trust committed, to pledges made, and to obligations assumed or borne, both human and Divine. He who follows the Savior closely, as all who profess his name should, will be loyal to all

duties. True, he may sometimes fail to meet the claims resting upon him. This is not to be brought into the account when every reasonable effort has been made. Still, in view of the possible failure of fulfilling some of the obligations of life, I am not disposed to lower the standard of faithfulness. I record it as one of the essential fruits of real manhood in Christ Jesus; and he who expects to sustain this character, must be firm and constant in adhering to his allegiance to God and his duties to his fellow-men.

(5.) As another grace of the Spirit which holds an eminent place in the formation as well as the maintenance of a Christlike character, I may mention *charity*. I use this term in its deepest and highest signification, including the most reverent love toward God and Jesus his Son, and a broad, generous affection toward men. But especially do I allude to it in its exercise toward the latter, as I have already numbered it in its direction toward the former as one of the elements of Christian character. It

has been called by some, "The crowning grace of Christianity." I not only regard it such, but also hold that it is the living force in the heart, sanctifying every act of obedience. It commences with the earliest growth of religious life, and flows with it up through all the stages of its development. Its existence in the soul is proven by its outward fruits; and in no part of the Divine law are these more clearly and concisely laid down and enforced than in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. It is said that "it suffereth long, *and* is kind; it envieth not;" it is not rash; it is not proud; it is unassuming; it is not avaricious; it is not irritable, nor given to evil surmisings; it takes no pleasure in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; it is patient, confiding, hopeful, and constant. Here are fourteen distinct directions—though bearing mutual relation—in which this heavenly power expresses itself. It runs through and beautifies the entire unfolding and maturity of Christian life. When it is wanting in the heart, no duty can be performed acceptably

before God; but its presence sanctifies obedience. I need, however, say no more on this as a development of Christian character. It is a question of such plainness that every true disciple of Jesus will admit all that I have claimed for it.

I propose, now, resting the answer to the question, *What is Christian character?* and, in doing this, I shall arrange consecutively the points which have been submitted. The elements of spiritual life are these: 1st. Faith in an infinite, all-wise, and beneficent Creator. 2d. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of the world. 3d. The heart must receive and nourish supreme love toward the infinite Father. 4th. Christ must be accepted by penitence and confession as the only Savior. Its developments are: 1st. A cheerful compliance with the duties arising from the preceding principles. 2d. An outward manifestation of holy, living fruits, as these: (1.) Truthfulness. (2.) Meekness. (3.) Kindness. (4.) Faithfulness. (5.) Charity.

Other traits of character might have

been introduced, but all are so interwoven with those mentioned that they do not need a separate consideration. I have, with sufficient definiteness, I think, met the question raised in the opening of this letter. You may regard the features rather sharply drawn, claiming that but few sustain all these characteristics. I am quite sure, if the Bible is to be the authority, that the character is not overdrawn. And moreover, I am equally sure that there are not only a few, but very many who fill all its outlines. As it regards the foibles and failings of the weak and the young in Christian experience, every good man knows how to make extenuations without compromising moral principle and purity. As such struggle amid sin, temptations, trials, and discouragements, up toward a higher plain of spiritual excellence, all genuine disciples will aid them by their own strong arms and generous hearts, while ever they can see the elements of true religious character unfolding and gathering strength.

I shall close this letter by referring very briefly to another question—to which allusion has been made—which some propound in view of the position that Christian character is the only true test of fellowship. It is this: Since the character here specified is the only basis of fellowship, and since this is not secured in an hour nor a day, but is the outward growth of an inward life, requiring an indefinite length of time for its formation, on what principle can any one be received for the first time into the fellowship of the Church? To this I reply: I should act in the premise precisely as I would in the purchase of a young and valuable fruit tree, the species of which I had no means of my own to determine, as it had yet borne no fruit. In this case, I should accept it on the word of the nursery-man, and govern myself accordingly. I am willing to extend the hand of Christian brotherhood to any one who professes faith in Christ, and accepts him as his Savior. I receive him on trust, but with confidence, having no means of

determining whether the elements that are essential to life in the Messiah lie deep in his heart, only by his public profession of them. I accept him as a Christian brother on his word. But my fellowship for him in the future depends upon the development of the fruit of the Spirit, which he, as well as every disciple of the Lord, is expected to bear; therefore, in whomsoever I witness *this* growing and ripening, to all such I most cheerfully and gladly extend the hand of fraternal love. *Here* I stand upon the important and interesting question of *Christian fellowship.*

Fraternally yours.

Letter V.

My Dear Sir and Brother:

In the four preceding letters, which I have had the pleasure of addressing to you, these questions have been discussed, namely: 1st. The Bible alone is a sufficient rule for religious faith and practice. 2d. Christian is the only divinely authorized name by which the followers of Christ should be known or called. 3d. Christian character is the only true test of Christian fellowship. I propose, in this, submitting, as a *fourth* reason for my being a member of the Christian Church, the *simplicity*, *reasonableness*, and *truthfulness* of the *sentiments* of this brotherhood respecting *God the Father and Christ Jesus the Son*. The limits I have set to myself in this correspondence, will not permit a lengthened discussion of these sentiments; and yet I

shall aim to be sufficiently thorough to show that they rest upon the surest foundation—Reason and Revelation; and, when compared with those enunciated by various creeds, that they are simple, agreeing with man's common sense conception of the infinite Being and his Son Jesus Christ as revealed in the inspired word.

I. I remark *first*, that the absolute unity of God, as a proposition of religious faith, is cheerfully accepted and maintained by this Church. It is not understood by the phrase *Unity of God* that there is simply oneness of counsel or of essence: or that there is no confusion in the purposes, plans, and executions manifested in the course of nature; but that he is *one being, one person;* that all things, animate and inanimate, are subject to one undivided mind, one omnipotent, all-wise Designer. This doctrine, it is maintained, is taught by the phenomena of the natural universe, and by the express declaration of revealed truth; hence, these two sources are applied to as witnesses in its proof.

The argument for the absolute unity of God based upon the manifestations of the natural universe may be thus stated: *The demands of sound philosophy are met when a sufficient cause is presented to account for the effects produced.* This plain axiom is the one adopted in all reasoning from effects to causes; and whenever, by a process of clear induction from effect, an adequate cause to account for it is reached, there the mind rests; and to push the inquiry beyond, is both unnecessary and unphilosophical. If we keep this axiom in view, and trace the connections, analogies, adaptations, and dependences which pervade the numerous parts of nature and unite them into one sublime whole, we shall perceive that it is opposed to sound reason to claim more gods than one, or more than one infinite and eternal Person.

For illustration: The Being who is capable of making one solitary blade of grass, is capable of producing innumerable blades. He who could create one shrub, could also create a complete tree; and he who could

produce one such, could produce all varieties. One omnipotent Being could accomplish all these; hence, the supposition that there is more than one all-wise Designer and Creator is both unnecessary and unreasonable. If we look closely into the nature and structure of the numerous species of plants that grow upon the surface of our globe, we shall learn that they are formed after one general model. They all have, in common, bark to shield them; they all have roots, stalks, and leaves to carry out the economy of life in themselves; they all demand similar external conditions, as soil, air, light, and moisture, for their nourishment; and not an instance is known, among all the variety of plants, in which there is not a complete apparatus for the propagation of its own species. Another remarkable fact is, that about ninety-four per cent. of all vegetable matter is composed of four simple organic elements; viz.: carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen. That all these designs should have been originated by many independent or

dependent deities is in the highest degree incredible and absurd.

The same mode of reasoning which we have applied to the vegetable creation, is equally applicable to the animal. He who could create one man with all his phenomena of physical and mental life, could bring into being any number; he who could cause the delicate down upon the beetle-fly's wing, could make the strong pinions of the eagle by which he mounts above the clouds; and he who could form the smallest insect, endowing it with life and motion, could produce the most gigantic animal with all its functions of existence. And it will be observed that the various tribes of animated creation, whether of men, birds, quadrupeds, insects, or fishes, exhibit, in carrying out the economy of life, many common features. All demand air and food; and the contrivances by which these are made available in perpetuating existence have strong points of resemblance. The air must be breathed, and the food must be eaten and digested; and to secure these, every ani-

mated creature is furnished with the necessary organs. Now, these facts, taken together, clearly demonstrate that the entire animal creation was originated by one intelligent Mind.

Again: The unity of the First Cause of all things may be argued from the adaptation of the several parts of creation to each other.

For illustration: The atmosphere which surrounds our globe is found to be one uniform substance, being wisely suited to the support of both animal and vegetable life. But that the air may send its vitalizing forces through the system, it must be breathed—taken in; and that this end may be secured to everything having life, all are provided with the apparatus precisely suited to obtain the supplies essential to its nature. To the animal are given lungs with the muscular action necessary to respiration. And how perfectly is the air adapted to this delicate organism; and there is an equal fitness in it for receiving and using the atmosphere as one of the indispensable

agents for building up and perpetuating existence. It is no less remarkable that in the vegetable creation as well as the animal, there are beautiful and wise arrangements for receiving and using the air for its growth and life. While the roots of the plant are imbibing water, which is raised into the tissues of the stem, dissolving small quantities of gum which had been previously deposited there, and finally passing to the leaves, the leaves themselves meanwhile had been breathing—so to speak—carbonic acid, decomposing it, retaining the carbon and sending forth pure oxygen. It is a curious fact as well as a wise and beneficial arrangement, that while animals in respiring give out carbonic acid, thus vitiating the atmosphere, and rendering it injurious to life, vegetables send out during the day oxygen, which in a great measure supplies that consumed by man and beast, and so maintains the just proportions of the elements essential to a healthful and invigorating atmosphere.

As further illustrating this argument,

permit me to refer to the adaptation of light to the eye and of the eye to the light. How complete is the structure of the one to receive the other, by which myriads of objects are made visible. The eye, in its natural condition, suffers no pain when the light falls upon it, but realizes a pleasure. Their adaptation to each other is so perfect that their conjunction produces the most exquisite delight and beneficial results. I might also speak of the essentiality and fitness of light, combined with other agents, to sustain life both in animals and plants; the adaptation of the ear to the undulations of the atmosphere to produce sound; the relations which the numerous tribes of both animate and inanimate existence sustain to this earth, its soils, its rivers, its seas, and oceans; all might be introduced in proof of their dependence upon and fitness to each other. But my limits will allow only the preceding indication of points and facts.

The conclusion I would draw from these and similar facts, is this: When a whole

is composed of numerous parts, each of which is a distinct organism, as the eye and the light, and when these several parts are so accurately adjusted to each other that the greatest benefit is secured and the harmony of the whole produced, both of which would be defeated in the absence of this adjustment, it follows that He who contrived one of these parts must have planned the others; for it is reasonable to suppose that one and the same mind is employed in contriving separate things, so adjusted in numerous minute particulars that their conjunction accomplishes a given purpose, and it is unreasonable to suppose otherwise. Hence, He who created the light, formed the eye for the reception of that light; He who created the atmosphere, composing it of the proportion of elements exactly suited to life, formed the lungs of man and of beast and the leaves of the tree and the plant to take in and use it for their growth and maturity; He who constructed the ear, adjusted the undulations of the air, so that they, by falling upon it,

should produce a given result; and He who formed the tribes of animals, with their wants, the plants, with their roots piercing the soil, and the atmosphere which girdles our globe, created the seas and oceans from which vapors are raised and carried by the buoyant and elastic air over the earth, and are shed down in showers upon the thirsty hills and plains, moistening the soil, and giving drink to man, and beast, and plant. It is evident that the same Mind that contrived one of the parts of creation planned all. From the dependence and adaptation of these numerous parts, in so many minute particulars, the unity of the First Cause of all is demonstrable.

But our earth, complete, perfect, and wonderful as it is in itself, is only a part of another grand and sublime system; and from the unity of the plan which obtains throughout this vast universe of worlds the unity of the Cause is clearly indicated. The sun forms the center of our own system of spheres, and sends forth to each its measure of light and heat; and by

his attraction holds them in their mighty orbits as they fly onward in their swift journey. These worlds are found to move from age to age with the same regularity and in the same direction, each describing the same geometrical figure, namely, the "ellipse." The degree of the velocity of each is determined by the same rule. All are subject to the regular alternation of day and night and to the "vicissitudes of the seasons." These facts furnish indubitable evidence that the same omnipotent Being who created the earth also formed the other planets; and that he who formed them created the sun, their common center, around which they move with sublime grandeur and undisturbed harmony. Thus, by examining, with all the aids furnished by man's inventive skill, all parts of creation, from the smallest up to the greatest, and marking their relations, dependences, resemblances, and adaptations, we are forced to the conclusion that they are all the workmanship of one infinite Intelligence.

But suppose it should be urged that the

material universe, with its various types of life, "may have been planned by the counsel and co-operation" of a plurality of Divine persons. To this I would oppose the following: 1st. Either all these persons were limited in their capacities; or else, 2d. One of them possessed omnipotent power and wisdom. Now, if the former be assumed, this question must be met and answered: Could any number of limited beings conjointly plan and create a universe of such measureless magnitude and of such infinite variety, adaptation, and harmony? Sound philosophy must answer in the negative. Their limited capacities would ultimate in confined views and in suggesting opposite schemes, the accomplishment of which would result in the wildest disorder. But if the latter be accepted, that one of these Divine persons was infinite in all his attributes, then was he capable of planning and executing this vast, complex, and yet harmonious universe; and, therefore, to believe in or claim any other originating cause is opposed to the axiom on which I

set out in this argument, namely: that the demands of reason and faith are fully met when a sufficient cause to account for the effect is attained. Here I rest the argument in support of the absolute unity of God founded upon the phenomenon of the sensible creation.

Let us now examine this question of faith by the inspired word. The testimony of Divine revelation as clearly and forcibly sustains the unity of the infinite Mind as is possible for language to establish any proposition. And without its plain and authoritative teaching it is probable that this grand truth would have remained unknown to, and unappreciated by man, notwithstanding its proofs lie everywhere in the infinite variety and harmony of the natural universe. On almost every page of the inspired volume is this doctrine written. It shines forth in that record with incomparable luster. To make known, confirm, and diffuse among the nations of the earth this truth, and from this lead them to worship one Divine Being, was the chief

purpose to be accomplished by raising up and inspiring the "Hebrew prophets," and by the working that grand series of miracles connected with the deliverance of the children of Israel from their intolerable bondage. And I may here submit that one of the purposes of the mission of Christ was to propagate this great truth, which underlies the whole Christian life, among the nations of the earth.

Permit me now to bring forward some of the testimony of inspiration in support of the absolute unity of God—that he is *one being, one person.* Jehovah, in declaring himself to his ancient people, said: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."—Deut. vi: 4. This cardinal doctrine was confirmed by the Messiah in his reply to the scribe, who asked: "What is the first commandment?"—Mark xii: 29. "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither *is there* any rock like our God."—1 Sam. ii: 2. "For thou art great, and doest wondrous things; thou *art* God alone."—Psalm lxxxvi; 10.

"Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one."—Gal. iii: 20. "*There* is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all."—Eph. iv: 4–6. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble."—James ii: 19. "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."—1 Tim. ii: 5. "We know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are gods many and lords many,) but to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."—1 Cor. viii: 4–6. With a directness, clearness, and strength of language unsurpassed, these texts, with scores of others, many of which will occur to the Bible student, affirm that the unoriginated

Cause of the material universe—"the Jehovah of the Jews"—the God and Father of all—is one person, one being, and *only one*.

To this great doctrine, Christ, the founder of the Christian faith, as well as the Redeemer of the world, and his inspired apostles, bear the most unequivocal testimony. Their uniform teaching on this question harmonizes with and confirms the record of Moses and the prophets. Nor can their language convey any other idea when speaking of Jehovah's personality, without wrenching it from its obvious import. When we read that "there is one God, and there is none other but he," the natural conclusion is, that he who is thus spoken of, is *one person*, unless the mind is controlled by prejudice. "The word God does not signify a collection of persons or a council of intelligent agents," but simply denotes one mind, one intelligent agent; hence, every text which declares that there is but one God, or that God is one, clearly teaches that there is but one person in the

godhead. Therefore, whatever assumes a plurality of persons in the Divine Being, affirms a sentiment adverse to the united testimony of these witnesses.

Another class of texts which indicate the strictest unity of God, is that in which *verbs* and pronouns, in the singular number, are used respecting him. In all languages, these are almost entirely understood to apply to one person. In our own there is no mistaking their application in this respect. Keeping this rule in view, allow me to make the following quotations. In speaking of himself, Jehovah says: "I am the Almighty God. Walk before me, and be thou perfect; and I will make my covenant between me and thee," etc.—Gen. xvii: 1, 2. In speaking to Moses, he says: "I am that I am," etc.—Ex. iii: 14. Again: "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."—Ex. vi: 3. "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord,

do all these *things*."—Isa. xlv: 7. "Now will I arise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself."—Isa. xxxiii: 10. The idea impressed upon the mind, and constantly kept before it, by such language is, that Jehovah is absolutely *one being—one person*. Not only does the infinite One, when speaking of himself, use invariably the singular pronoun—except in four instances, (Gen. i: 26; iii: 22; xi: 7; Isa. vi: 8,) which are easily made to harmonize with the texts which speak of him as one person; but when addressed is always mentioned in that form of speech. To this there is not a solitary exception in the Book of Revelation. I here give a few examples, which will afford a brief view of the manner in which the devout of olden times addressed the Jehovah of the Bible. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven of heavens can not contain thee," etc.—1 Kings viii: 27. Compare 2 Chronicles ii: 6. "Blessed be thou, Jehovah, God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, *is* the greatness,

and the power, * * * * thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come *of* thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all."—1 Chron. xxix: 10–12. "I will be glad, and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High."—Psalm ix: 2. "With the merciful, thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man, thou wilt show thyself upright."—Psalm xviii: 25; also verses 26, 27, 28, 29. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there.* *If* I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."—Psalm cxxxix: 7–14. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also

may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."—John xvii: 1–3. Indeed, in the beautiful, loving, and earnest prayer of Christ, forming the chapter of which the last quotation is a part, he uses the singular pronoun, applying it to the Father no less than *fifty-two times*. I might add largely to the texts already introduced, which connect the name of God with pronouns in the singular. The number might be increased indefinitely, as nearly every page of the inspired word is replete with texts that teach with unsurpassed clearness the simple and yet sublime doctrine that *God is one*.

It may be proper that I mention a few texts as examples of a numerous class, which declare, in the most unqualified manner, that Jehovah, who is one person, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the testimony they fur-

nish: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope," etc.—1 Peter i: 3. "Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."—2 Cor. i: 3. "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."—Eph. i: 3. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom," etc.—Eph. i: 17. To these texts might be added more than one hundred which teach with great plainness that the uncreated Cause of all things is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also of all mankind. I can not well get the consent of my mind to decline quoting the following passages, which show the relation of the Father and the Son: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is

God."—1 Cor. xi: 3. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, * * * all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."—1 Cor. iii: 23, 24.

The texts I have brought forward (and the number might be swelled to many hundred, on this question now before us) are so plain that comment is unnecessary. From their testimony, the following points are clearly deducible: 1st. That there is one uncreated Cause of all things. 2d. That this Cause of all things is an intelligent mind or agent. 3d. That this intelligent mind is He whom we call Jehovah, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. 4th. That this Jehovah is *one being—one person.* 5th. That he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 6th. That he is distinct in personality or being from the Son, since he is declared to be the "head of Christ," as Christ is the head of the man. My opinion is, that no one can look with an unbiased mind at the overwhelming evidence the Bible furnishes on this subject, and come to any other con-

clusion than that the unoriginated Creator of the universe, the Jehovah of the Jews, the God and Father of Christ the Son, is a unit—*absolutely one being—one person.* If this doctrine be true, and, as far as I know, it is denied by no Christian man, then the affirmation of a plurality of persons in Jehovah must be incorrect, untrue. Believing the former, I reject the latter: receiving and maintaining the strict *unity of the Divine Mind.*

II. I remark, *secondly*, that the proposition, *Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God*, is accepted and believed by the Christian Church as Divine truth, fully sustained by the word of inspiration. The charge not unfrequently alleged against us that we regard Christ as a mere man, somewhat superior to the prophets or to Moses, is without foundation in fact. We hold him not only to be superior to men, but to angels also, both in nature and character. We believe in him, and preach him as a complete Savior and Redeemer. In this sentiment lies the very pith of the follow-

ing words of Jesus: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Now every soul that believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and receives him as such with humbleness of heart, to him he is an all-sufficient Savior. If he accepts reverently and with all the strength of his spiritual nature, the teachings of the Scriptures on this question of religious faith, his belief is well founded, though he may reject every human creed that has been constructed since the days of Constantine till now.

I propose briefly asking attention to the light in which the New Testament presents Christ to the human family. If we look at him from this stand-point, uninfluenced by preconceived opinions, we shall very likely obtain correct ideas respecting him.

1st. *The Scriptures present him to the world as God's Son, his own Son, his dear Son, his only begotten Son, his beloved Son.* Jesus says, in repelling a false accusation alleged by his enemies against him: "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; be-

cause I said, I am the Son of God."—John x: 36. John the Baptist, in announcing Christ to his countrymen, says: "And I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God."—John i: 34. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."—John iii: 17. Martha, in reply to the consoling words of the Savior respecting the death of her brother, said: "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."—John xi: 27. Luke, in his history of apostolic labor, in speaking of Paul's first work in the ministry, writes: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."—Acts ix: 20. In answer to this question, "Whom say ye that I am?" which the Lord propounded to his apostles, Peter replied: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Savior promptly, and in the strongest language, approved the sentiment of his servant: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed

this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xvi: 16, 17. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*."—John i: 18. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life. He that believeth on the Son, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."—John iii: 16–18. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."—1 John iv: 9. On two memorable occasions, the infinite Father acknowledged, by word, Christ to be his beloved Son. The first of these was at his baptism, and is thus recorded by Matthew: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a

dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matt. iii: 16, 17. Compare Mark i: 10, 11, and Luke iii: 21, 22. The second of these occasions was in a mountain, and in the presence of three of his apostles, and is thus stated by his biographers: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."—Matt. xvii: 5. Compare Mark ix: 7; Luke ix: 35, and 1 Peter i: 17. This catalogue of texts, proving that Christ is the Son of God, his own Son, his beloved and only begotten Son, might be largely increased, as every student of the Scriptures is fully aware; but those already introduced are entirely sufficient. Indeed, it could not be more clearly set forth and demonstrated by the concurrence of a thousand texts than by those quoted. It would be impossible to produce more powerful testimony than they afford. Language

could not convey it with greater distinctness. It is proved by the conjoined evidence of John the Baptist; of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; of the apostles, Peter and Paul; of Christ himself, and of the Father. What an array of witnesses! The testimony they give is plain, forcible, unambiguous, direct, and conclusive.

It may be well to refer for a moment to this question which some may raise, namely: What does the phrase, *Only begotten Son of God*, signify? The terms "Son of God, beloved Son, His dear Son, His only begotten Son," are personal appellatives, and are used to express the personal relation of Christ to Jehovah the Father. Herein they differ from the term Messiah, which is an official title. The former point out the natural relation of the Son to the Father; the latter marks the official relation of the Son to men. Hence, I do not regard the miraculous conception of Christ, nor his resurrection from the dead, as the ground of his Sonship. It rests upon a

higher foundation than either of these. The Divine relation he sustains to God the Father, as the only begotten, full of grace and truth, is the basis of his Sonship. His miraculous conception and birth were the medium through which the Son should be made manifest to the world and become its Redeemer; his resurrection was the completion of the work of redemption and the vindication of him as the sent of God, the Savior of the world. Hence, the apostle says: "Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Angels are called sons of God; and Adam is called the son of God; and so are Christians called the sons of God; but Christ is called His beloved Son, His dear Son, His only begotten Son; and it is declared that "He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than the angels;" all of which clearly indicate that he is in nature and in character superior to men or angels.

2d. Christ is presented as having been commissioned by his Father to redeem the world; and also, as accomplishing this work by the authority and power of Jehovah. On this point the Scriptures are full and specific in their testimony. A few texts as examples must suffice: "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world."—1 John iv: 14. "For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me."—John viii: 42. Jesus says, while praying to his Father for his apostles: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."—John xvii: 18. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."—John iv: 34. "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me," etc. "But I have greater

witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me."—John v: 23, 24, 36, 37. "Jesus answered and said unto them: This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will that sent me," etc. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me shall live by me."—John vi: 29, 38, 39, 57. In these quotations it is affirmed without any qualification, that Jesus Christ is the commissioned or sent of God.

The Son, in vindicating himself against false allegations respecting the authority under which he acted and the power by which he carried forward the work of his mission, says, in reply to the query of the Jews how he knew letters, as he had never

learned: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself."—John vii: 15–17. Again, he declares: "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me."—John v: 30. "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."—John xii: 49, 50. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father," etc.—Matt. xi: 27. "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand."—John iii: 35. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God."—John xiii: 3. "And Jesus came and spake unto

them, saying: All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—Matt. xxviii: 18. As the Son received his authority and power from the Father to perfect the plan of salvation, and also to administer the affairs of the kingdom of grace, so will he when the last enemy is destroyed deliver up what he now holds, as declared in the last quotation, by the gift of the Father.

To this the inspired penman bears the following testimony: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him, it is* manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all

things under him, that God may be all in all."—1 Cor. xv: 24–28.

Many claim that the texts, such as I have quoted, which speak of Christ's receiving power and authority of God the Father to work miracles, publish the Divine will and finish the scheme of redemption, allude to his human nature, and to this they refer all such Scripture. To this I oppose the following reasons: 1st. It would reduce the Son of God to mere humanity; for to him, the Son, was this power given. 2d. All power in heaven and in earth, appertaining to man's eternal salvation, would be committed into the hands of human nature simply. 3d. Our Redeemer and Savior would be merely a human being. 4th. The Mediator of the new covenant would be humanity only. These, to my mind, are serious objections to referring these and similar texts to "Christ as man." Nor will it obviate these difficulties by claiming that in connection with this human nature of Christ there was a Divine nature, which was the

infinite Jehovah; for the terms Son of God, Only begotten Son, Beloved Son, etc., as well as the declarations: "I can of mine own self do nothing;" "All power in heaven and in earth is given into my hands," are applicable either to Christ's "human nature" only, or to both his human and Divine nature. If the former be assumed, then the four objections already submitted must be met; but if the latter be claimed, then, since the terms Son of God, Only begotten Son, etc., and the declarations: "All power in heaven and in earth is given into my hands;" "I can of mine own self do nothing," etc., are applied to both the human and Divine nature of Christ; and since this Divine nature, agreeably to the preceding hypothesis, is the eternal Jehovah, it follows that the omnipotent Being is a Son—an only begotten Son. And further, that He who possessed absolutely all power, nevertheless had it given to him; and that He who could do all things, yet of himself could do nothing. It will not do, therefore, to refer the Scriptures I

have quoted to the humanity nor yet to the self-existent Being, but to the Divine Son of God, who existed with the Father before the world was.

From the preceding texts, the number of which might be increased many fold, in proof of the question under examination, the following points are sustained with great distinctness: 1st. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, his only begotten and beloved Son. 2d. That he was commissioned to develop and carry to its completion the plan of redemption. 3d. That he derived from the Father the power by which he unfolded and ratified the new covenant, and by which, also, as Mediator, he should carry out its provisions. 4th. That when these provisions shall be fully met, He, the Son, shall surrender to the Father the power, or the kingdom, which he now holds, and which he received from the Father, "that God may be all in all." The rational and Scriptural conclusion which may be drawn from the evidence and argument submitted, as well as from the current

teaching of the inspired word, is that Jesus Christ the Son is distinct in personality, or in being, from the Father; that he is not the infinite Jehovah, whose Son he is repeatedly declared to be; that he is not that eternal Being who sent him, who gave him all power to finish the work of salvation, and whose words he spake; but that he is the only begotten Son of the one omnipotent God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. To establish this doctrine, that Jesus is the Son of the Most High and by him was divinely commissioned to be the world's Redeemer, and also to demonstrate the Fatherhood of God, all that splendid series of miracles which the New Testament records was wrought by the Messiah. This is manifest, whether you contemplate him feeding the multitude, hushing the stormy winds and stilling the waves of the sea, healing the leprosy, restoring sight to the blind beggar, raising the widow's son and giving him alive to her arms, or standing with the weeping sisters, Mary and Martha, beside the tomb

of a deceased brother, and calling him back to life and friends again. I say, whether you view him in connection with any of these amazing miracles, or others no less wonderful, the central idea designed to be proven by them was the Sonship of Christ. It is therefore written: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD; and that believing ye might have life through his name."—John xx: 30, 31.

Take the teaching of the Scriptures, with a legitimate construction, and the miracles they record, and these ideas of Jehovah the Father and of Jesus the Son, are set forth with unsurpassed clearness: 1st. That the infinite, omnipotent God—the First Cause of all things—*is one being, one person, and only one.* 2d. That Jesus Christ is *the only begotten Son of God*, the Redeemer of the world; and as such is able to save to the uttermost all that will come unto the

Father by him. These sentiments respecting Jehovah and his Son Jesus Christ, we believe and preach, regarding them as the foundation of the world's regeneration. They are in harmony with the evidence of inspiration, and with our common-sense conception of the nature and fitness of things.

In contrast with these plain, reasonable, and Scriptural propositions of faith, touching God the Father and his Son our Savior, I shall here submit the sentiments on these topics of religious belief, as taught and enforced by various creeds. I do this that you may compare them, side by side, with the truth.

The Athanasian Creed, as it is commonly called, though written many years after his death, submits the following article of faith respecting the infinite Being, namely: "And the Catholic faith is this: that we worship ONE GOD IN TRINITY, and TRINITY IN UNITY; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the FATHER, another of the

Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost: the Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate; the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible; the Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal; and yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty; and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord; and yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as

we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord; so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say, There be three Gods or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity, none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are coeternal together, and coequal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the UNITY IN TRINITY and the TRINITY IN UNITY is to be worshiped. He, therefore, that will be saved, must thus think of the TRINITY."

This creed, though written toward the close of the fifth century, was not much known till toward the end of the sixth, when it began to receive the comments of

its admirers. Some centuries later, "it was successively introduced into France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and England, where it still forms a part of the public worship."

"The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church," after stating in the most explicit terms, that there is but one "living and true God," and also mentioning his attributes and perfections, says: "In the unity of the godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

The creed of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, after asserting the perfect unity of Jehovah, in speaking of the Trinity, says: "In unity of this godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

The "articles of religion" of the Method-

ist Episcopal Church on this question, as well as on many others, are copies, with some amendments, of the articles of faith of the Episcopal Church. And I may add, at this point, that these creeds enunciate substantially the same doctrine respecting the Son. They all declare him to be the Son of God, and yet claim that he is "the very and eternal God." They affirm that Christ was composed of "two whole and perfect natures; that is to say, the godhead and manhood;" that he was "very God and very man," and yet that there are not two persons in Christ, but one.

A little mature reflection on the preceding questions of faith, as taught by these as well as other creeds, will show that many of their terms are palpably inconsistent with each other, and also at variance with the teaching of inspiration when legitimately interpreted. For illustration, take the following from the Athanasian Creed: "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost." In the expansion of this proposition, it de-

clares: "The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate; the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible; the Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal." Now, this language, fairly construed, of necessity conveys the idea of *three uncreated*, *incomprehensible*, and *eternal beings*. And yet, in the very next clause, we are told that "they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal." If the Father is a person, and the Son a person, and the Holy Ghost a person; and if, as is asserted, each of these is eternal, then to declare that there is but one Eternal, is as transparent a contradiction in terms as is possible to make. It continues: "So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty; and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty." Now, attach the term *person*, as we have a right to do, to the name Almighty, and we have: The Father is an almighty person, the Son an almighty person, and the

Holy Ghost an almighty person; from which the conception of three almighty persons or beings would be resistlessly forced upon the mind.

But we would be nevertheless told that there are not three almighty persons, but one almighty person, although these two statements are directly antagonistic. It also tells us that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God;" and that each of these is "Lord;" and that we are commanded "to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord;" and yet it forbids us "to say, There be three Gods or three Lords." It thus prohibits us from believing—were it even possible—what it affirms, and what is the obvious import of its language. But I need analyze it no further, as its abstract complexity and self-contradictions are perfectly palpable. And yet we are gravely told, "He, therefore, that will be saved, must thus think of the TRINITY."

This doctrine, as set forth in the other creeds, to which allusion has been made,

has undergone very essential modification compared with it as contained in the Athanasian. Still, with all this change, which is marked, as any one may see, it is abstract, dark; and some of its terms are irreconcilable. Take, for instance, the proposition that there "is but one living and true God," and reconcile it with this: "In unity of the godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." Now, the terms here used are perfectly plain. All know what "*person*" means, and also what "*three*" and "*substance*" signify. And when the phrase "*three persons of one substance*" is used, the conception of the mind, if it reflects at all, is three beings possessing one nature. And when the name "God" is given to each of these persons the idea which the language compels us to receive, is a plurality of Gods. And yet it disclaims this, and tells us there "is but one living and true God." The entire mental power feels that there must be a mistake

somewhere; that a part of this article of faith can not be true. Again: take the idea that the Son is as absolutely God as the Father, and harmonize it with the sentiment that the Son is begotten of the Father. The word beget signifies *to procreate, to generate, to cause to exist.* The idea that the Son, who was begotten, is coeternal with the Father who begot him, can not be believed, because it involves an unmistakable absurdity. The mind, from the force of habit formed by taking it for granted, may submit to it without very seriously questioning it, but it can not believe it; for it dare not weigh it with that nice comprehension of the meaning of terms, and that close analysis of evidence and argument which, when applied to the truth, will result in faith; if it did, this doctrine, as contained in the various creeds, would be rejected. And yet all this is labeled, "*Orthodox.*" And to him who would be received into its fellowship, this or an analogous question is put: Do you believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God

the Holy Ghost? Where, permit me to ask, is the authority for any such interrogation? It can not be found in the Bible; therefore, he who propounds it assumes the right, for the Scriptures nowhere confer it.

But enough has been said to show that the creeds on this doctrine are dark, abstract, mysterious, and irreconcilable in their terms. Now, alongside this chaos, this conflict of terms and ideas, lay down the following inspired propositions of faith: "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.*" "*But unto us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*" "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" On these, with all the powers of head and heart, I rest my faith. They form the sheet-anchor of my best hope for time and eternity.

Here I rest my pen, praying earnestly that our hearts, filled with humility and reverence, may be guided into all truth, and at last into heaven itself.

Fraternally yours.

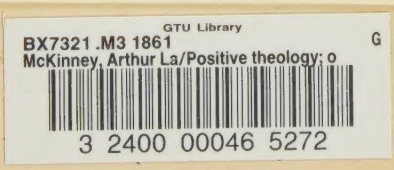
DATE DUE

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

93404
BX
7321 Positive theology/
M3 A.L. McKinney
1861

McKinney, Arthur Layton
Positive theology

BX
7321
M3
1861

LC Coll.